

Preface.



IF there is a country that bears its history impressed on its surface and on the character of its people, that country is Russia. To the traveller from the west, Russian scenery, away from the great towns, has a forlorn, half-savage aspect, as of a land that is only being reclaimed from a state of nature. To understand why this is so, he must keep in mind not alone the harshness of the climate and the sparseness of the population, but also the fact that the tillers of the soil, as a class, are more poor and ignorant and superstitious than the peasantry of the other Christian countries of Europe; that till a few years ago they were serfs, bought and sold with the land; and that even to-day they have scarcely begun to enjoy or appreciate the blessings of true liberty. To know why the bulk of the Russian people are so far in the wake of civilization, one must dip a little into the national history.

It has been thought well, therefore, in an account of the Russian Empire, to embody a sketch of its historical development. Instead of seeking to describe the various provinces in any geographical order, it has been attempted roughly to follow the process of growth by which, from small beginnings, the dominions of the Czar have reached their present vast proportions. The planting of the germs of power in the forests of Novgorod,

the quarrels of rival principalities on the Dnieper, the conquests of the half-Tartar czarate on the Volga, the ambitious strivings of the modern state which Peter established on the Neva, and the restless aggressions and annexations that have marked her more recent history, may be seen to have each had its several influence in producing that wonderful social and political phenomenon—the Russia of to-day. In giving some popular idea of that phenomenon there may probably be found, notwithstanding the care taken to avoid them, errors in the grouping, in proportion, and in conception and presentation of facts; and for excuse, reference can only be made to the vast dimensions of the subject and the extreme multiplicity of the details.

But the past of Russia, besides explaining its present, is of the highest importance in interpreting its future—a subject which recent events have helped to make matter of painful conjecture. It is clear that this great country has reached a crisis in its fate. The three chief powers to be reckoned with, it would seem, are a corrupt military bureaucracy, that has almost said its last word—that is clearly moving towards bankruptcy and ruin; a people still almost dumb and blind, and only half-conscious that they have rights and grievances; and a party of wild political dreamers, strong as yet only by reason of desperation, that seek, as the sole panacea for the ills of society, the total destruction of order and law. What will be the issue of the struggle for Russia it is impossible almost to guess; before it, as a French writer has said, there rises “an immense note of interrogation.”

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ceivably great as have been the changes which these facts reveal, the most "portentous birth" of latter times, at least in its imposing magnitude, must be pronounced to be the Empire of the White Czar.

When this country was achieving its "Revolution," and laying down on firm lines the foundations of its national progress and its constitutional liberty, Russia—Muscovy, as our forefathers would have called it—was a semi-Asiatic state, still thickly crusted with the rust of barbarism. Few dreamed of its future destiny, though its progress had already been rapid and continuous. It counted for little more in the European "balance of power" than the Empire of Morocco does to-day, and was indeed scarcely classed among the European family of nations. It was still to all intents and purposes an inland state, with no commerce save what was carried through the territories of its neighbours. The Kingdom of Poland had not only a sea-board on the Baltic, but ports on the Black Sea. The Mohammedan Khanate of Crim-Tartary interposed between the southern margin of Muscovy and the Euxine. Fierce, independent Circassian and Tartar tribes held the country between the Don and the Caucasus. Sweden possessed not Finland alone, but Livonia, Esthonia, and the site of the modern capital of the Czars. Towards the north, on the shores of the White Sea, the rulers of Moscow had indeed an outlet to the ocean; but this, and all the channels leading to it, were closed during the long months of the Arctic winter.

To the eastward the limits of the empire were less well defined. The Czars held as much as they were able of the ground roamed over by the nomad tribes of

two hundred years back. As in the days of the Greek and Roman geographers, these remote regions were the abodes of myths and chimeras. The few ascertained facts were distorted by fear and prejudice and by the mists of uncertain distance. The fabulous races with which the old world writers had peopled Inner Scythia had indeed disappeared from the maps. No one now had faith in the existence of the war-loving Amazons; of tribes that once a year were transformed into were-wolves, and roamed through the gloom of the northern forests with the lust of blood and slaughter glowing in their red eyes; of races that were bald-headed from birth to old age, or who devoured their parents to save the expense of burying them. The man-eaters by the Arctic Seas, the one-eyed Arimasbian who contended with the winged griffon for the possession of the Mines of Gold, the dog-headed people, or that still stranger headless race with a single eye planted in the middle of the breast who inhabited the innermost recesses of the desert, had been relegated to the realm of poetry and fable. Only a few enthusiastic imaginations still cherished the idea of the Riphæan Mountains, with their impenetrable wall of snow, behind which, "at the back of the north wind," dwelt the venerable Hyperboreans in the practice of all the virtues and in the enjoyment of eternal calm, in a region where the feathery snow-flakes fell continually, and day succeeded night at intervals of six months.

The names and something of the character and habitat of several of the more important of the tribes of Northern Asia were known; but concerning their geographical and political relations and their race affinities

only the vaguest notions were afloat. A comparatively short time had elapsed since these fierce barbarians had precipitated themselves on Europe and laid it waste up to the walls of Liegnitz; and the flood of Tartar invasion had barely ebbed back within the limits of Asia when Czar Peter began to reign. The natural tendency was to make an exaggerated estimate of their numbers and their destructive power; and so the picture that stamped itself upon the popular fancy regarding the northern and central parts of Asia, and which has continued to be more or less distinctly impressed there down to the present day, is that of an illimitable waste, grim, hungry, and forbidding, and yet, in spite of its barrenness, holding within its savage girdle of mountains myriads of outlandish races with high cheek-bones and obliquely-set eyes, who are continually engaged in furious strife with each other, but who might at any moment unite their forces and pour in a resistless torrent over Europe or India.

Marco Polo's famous account of his journey across Asia to the court of the great Kublai Khan at Pekin, and through the length and breadth of the Middle Kingdom, was still the chief repository of facts relating to this part of the world; and so vague was the information possessed even by the learned two centuries ago, that we find the whole region north of the Oxus and east of the Ural Mountains, comprehending modern Siberia and Turkestan, slumped together as "Grand Tartary." So inadequate was the conception of the enormous extension of Asia to the northward and eastward, that the Dutch and English navigators who strove for more than a century—from 1553 to 1676—

to discover a "north-east passage" to China and India by coasting the Arctic shores of Russia, imagined that if they could only round the cape to the south of Vaygatz Strait, opposite Novaya Zemlia, and on the frontier of Europe and Asia, they might then turn their vessel's head to the south-east and sail directly to Cathay and the Islands of Spice, and thus completely outdistance their Spanish and Portuguese rivals in the Eastern Seas, who had to make the long voyage by the Cape of Good Hope or Cape Horn. That this ignorance of the actual outline of the Russian Empire continued down to our own day was proved by Nordenskiöld, who in his memorable exploit of threading the long-sought-for North-East Passage, and circumnavigating for the first time the continents of the Old World, sailed over tracts of sea which were laid down in the maps as dry land, and found a bold and high coast where he had been led to expect a navigable ocean.

But the knowledge possessed by the rest of Europe regarding the true kinship and character of the Russian people themselves, and of the nature and strength of the power wielded by the Czar of Muscovy, was scarcely less ill defined than that as to the vast supplementary empire that was growing up in Asia. The early glories of Novgorod and Kiev, when the Grand Princes espoused daughters of the Emperors of the East, and were united by marriage with half the crowned heads of Europe, had been obscured or forgotten in the long night of Tartar domination that followed the invasion of the Golden Horde.

It is true that, having at length thrown off the yoke of its barbarian masters, the young Muscovite power bounded along the course marked out for it with

gigantic strides. But it had a long leeway to make up. It had to work "overtime," as it were, to bring itself into the same field with its more favoured western competitors. While it was struggling almost despairingly for national existence, they had been passing through rapid changes in their political, social, and intellectual development. Paganism and Mohammedanism were round it on three sides, and in its midst. The race, like the land, was in the primitive stages of cultivation. The intelligence of the people was obscured by the grossest superstitions. The necessity of constantly watching and encountering their terrible Mongol foes turned their faces towards the dark east instead of westward, where the new light was rising. Their political relations were with Asia rather than with Europe. Other countries had long ago received, and more or less successfully absorbed, all the constituent elements of their nationalities. Celts, Teutons, and Slavs had already taken up their appointed places, and were busy adjusting questions of precedence.

Russia, however, was still within the flood-mark of barbarism. The exodus of the nations from Central Asia—the process that had been going on from the earliest beginnings of history, when we see Cimmerians pushed forward by Scythians, Issedones treading on the heels of Massagetæ, and political convulsions within the Wall of China sweeping away the decaying barriers of the Roman Empire, and pouring hosts of Goths, Huns, and Vandals into Europe—was still in active operation there. As had been the case for centuries, these Eastern Slavs had to bear the first shock of the charge of the Asiatic hosts. No sooner was one tribe overthrown

than the way was left open for another and still stronger that came on in its turn, to be in turn absorbed or exterminated.

Russia was therefore constantly acquiring from without, by the westward movement of population and the eastward extension of her frontiers, vast additions to her stock of inhabitants. And these were no longer, as in the earlier immigrations, Aryan peoples of her own kin, but races of Turanian or semi-Turanian origin, half-savage Finnish, Mongol, and Turkish tribes, hard of assimilation into a stable and well-governed state. She managed to incorporate them. The Russians have a great natural talent in that direction. Their stage of progress was not so far removed from that of the peoples whom they absorbed as to prevent them from mingling with them easily and on equal terms. The process of the "Russification" of these alien nations has been a rapid and effectual one, and has no parallel in the history of British colonization; but it has, as a matter of course, considerably impeded the social progress of the Russian people.

On the other hand, while Russia's political outlook had been towards Asia, her culture and religion, such as they were, had been derived from Constantinople. This fact has had a most powerful influence on the national life and character, and has formed a main part of the great wall of division separating Russia from the knowledge and sympathy of the rest of Europe. Not only were there the antagonism of race and religion, and the difficulties of an unknown language, and even alphabet, to overcome, but Russia had adopted another type of civilization, a different standard of taste and morals from

her neighbours in the west. Peter the Great was the first who thoroughly understood the great loss that his country suffered from this isolation, or at least he was the first who had the far-seeing sagacity and boldness to set himself with all his might to break down the barriers. Russia had still no foothold on the Baltic. The site of the great capital, which is the most magnificent and enduring memorial of Peter's superb ambition, was a lonely marsh, which had still to be won from the Swede, and that Swede no other than Charles the Twelfth. He chose this spot for the seat of his court and the centre of his power, and he called it "the window" by which Russia would see into Europe, and learn the lesson of progress. It has been in scarcely a less degree a window by which Europe has peered into the interior gloom of Russia, and with a half-sympathetic, half-apprehensive feeling has watched its wonderful brightening. If the heart of Russia still beat at Moscow, her eye and brain, her perceptive and intellectual faculties, were removed to St. Petersburg. She had become at length a European power; and she attracted to herself more and more of the curiosity and wonder of the world, as she strode on from conquest to conquest, while the solid development of her internal strength and the progressive enlightenment of her people almost kept pace with her vast aggrandizements to north, south, east, and west.

We have learned much regarding the Russian land and people since we have been thus brought face to face with them. Scores of observers have noted the peculiarities of the government, religion, and social life. Tourists may now travel with ease from one end to the other of the European possessions of the Czar; while

enterprising explorers have penetrated into the remotest corners of his vast Asiatic domains. More important than all, a national literature has arisen, in which we can read more clearly than in a thousand descriptions what are the aspirations and the mental characteristics of the race.

Yet it cannot be said that we know Russia and its people thoroughly, or even well. It is so colossal and so complicated a phenomenon that is presented to us, that it is not easy to fix an adequate picture of it in the mind. From the Danube to Behring Strait, from Archangel to Samarcand, what a "multitude of all peoples and tongues and nations that no man can number" are comprised within the bounds of the Russian Empire! Within are found representatives of all the northern and eastern and of many of the southern and western races of the Old World. Every phase of civilization, from the highest to the most primitive, and nearly every variety of religion—Christian, Jewish, Mohammedan, Buddhist, and pagan—are represented. Dr. Latham, as the result of his ethnological studies, which he admits to be imperfect, has reckoned up no fewer than forty-seven "non-Russian" races dwelling within the bounds of Russia proper. In Asia, and in the Polish, Circassian, and other alien European provinces, there are at least as many more. And in customs, costumes, and languages there is almost as much variety as in race and religion. The empire of the White Czar is the bond of union between two great continents, which are otherwise sharply opposed to each other in every physical and mental feature. It leans on one side against the great Wall of China, and neighbours on the other side with Germany; and it

shades away so insensibly from Western progress and culture to Oriental immobility, that it is impossible to put down the finger anywhere, and say, "Here Asia begins."

Not less striking is the diversity of scenery comprehended within the Russian Empire. Busy sea-ports on the Baltic and Euxine, with quays lined with steamers and crowded with merchandise, and trackless Mongolian wastes, where the solitary traveller may ride for many days without encountering a human habitation; garish new cities, where streets and boulevards and the costumes of the people smack of the latest Parisian taste, and decaying seats of Tartar and Uzbeg power, whose ancient magnificence is crumbling into dust; waving corn-fields stretching for hundreds of square leagues over the "Black Lands" of the Dnieper and Boug, and dreary tracts by the Arctic Sea, where it is impossible to tell where the frozen plain ends and the ice-field begins; white winter landscapes, where the ringing sledge speeds along under the keen stars and the snow-covered branches of the pines, and the soft steady tramp of the wolves is heard in the distance, and Khi-van deserts, where the blazing sun shines down on the fainting camel-drivers, as they toil through the hot sands; squat Laplanders and Samoyedes driving their reindeer to the pasture; Kamschadales putting out to sea in their frail kajaks, in chase of the walrus and the seal; hardy lumbermen descending the northern rivers in their huge rafts of larch and fir trees; Yakut fur trappers following the tracks of silver fox and marten across the snow; sturgeon-fishers landing their mighty prize on the shores of the Volga and the Don: Turco-

mans and Kipchaks riding forth on marauding and kidnapping expeditions; Kalmuk and Kirghiz shepherds watching their flocks on the steppe, with their guns conveniently at hand; Caucasian mountaineers leaping from crag to crag in chase of ibex and chamois; uncouth Manchurian merchants bringing their bales of silk and brick-tea to the Russian markets; Cossack colonists on disturbed and distant frontiers, where the settler has to till the ground with arms in his hand; dark and mysterious scenes of suffering endured by exiles in the Siberian mines; peaceful log-built villages in Central Russia, where the vastest social and political revolutions produce scarcely a ripple on the even current of peasant life; court splendours and great military displays; the interior of Christian churches, Mohammedan mosques, and Buddhist temples; mighty rivers, interminable marshes, and great salt and fresh water lakes; deserts of salt and shingle and sand and snow; vast forests, boundless grassy plains, and lonely Alpine peaks;—these and a hundred other pictures equally startling in their contrast rise before the mind when the name of Russia is mentioned.

But, after all, considering the stupendous area it covers, it is not diversity, but rather uniformity, even monotony, that is the distinguishing characteristic of the empire of Russia. Bulky though it is—stretching through one hundred and sixty degrees of longitude, and from far within the Arctic Circle to semi-tropical lands—it is one great whole, not only having continuity of extent, but uniformity of natural features. Compared with Western Europe, and even Southern Asia, it is a solid mass of land, indented to only a small extent by arms of the sea, and less dependent upon or connected with the

ocean than any other territory of similar extent. M. Rambaud, in his "History of Russia," has on this account described the region west of the Ural Mountains as the "Continental Europe," as distinguished from "Maritime Europe." Another physical peculiarity has suggested the name of "Europe of the Plains," as contrasted with "Europe of the Mountains," applied to the countries to the westward. Unlike its neighbours, Russia has a mountain girdle, but no mountain system. The Caucasus, the Urals, the Carpathians, the plateau of Finland, have been termed its frame—its limits, as laid down by nature; but within these bounds, and that of the seas that wash its shores, there is scarcely an eminence worthy of the name of a hill. The rivers draining to the Black Sea and the Caspian, and those flowing to the Baltic and the Arctic Ocean, take their rise at an elevation of a few hundred feet above sea-level. In a large measure the still more extensive territory of Siberia is a counterpart of European Russia. Except in its eastern parts, its great ranges of mountains are on its frontiers; but there is this important difference, that the drainage of the rivers and the slope of the country are towards the north and the Frozen Ocean.

If Russia, however, has not mountains to break up her unity and form natural barriers between her peoples, she has abundance of mighty streams. Few countries are so well favoured in regard to deep and navigable rivers. The Obi, the Yenisei, the Lena, the Volga, the Don, and the Dnieper are all rivers of the first rank, whose courses from source to mouth are within her borders. Many of their tributaries are great rivers over a thousand miles in length: while a score of inde-

pendent streams could be mentioned that excel in size any of the rivers of Western Europe. Besides these, Russia has frontier rivers of historic note—the Danube, the Amoor, and the Oxus—scarcely inferior in volume to those that have been mentioned. But in the winter the Russian land is “one and indivisible.” An Arctic climate reigns from Lapland to the Kirghiz Steppe, and from St. Petersburg to Kamschatka. The temperature rushes from one extreme to another. The Polar air-currents and the hot winds from the sandy deserts east of the Caspian have alike an uninterrupted sweep across the level plains. Archangel has its broiling sun and its clouds of mosquitoes during its short summer; while at Odessa and Astrakhan the mercury ranges many degrees below zero in the winter months. The rivers are then all ice-bound, and the inequalities of the land are smoothed over by the universal covering of snow.

These common conditions of climate and surroundings have had an incalculable influence on the spread of the Russian nation, and in welding out of many materials one massive whole. For as with the land, so with the people: while there are endless varieties and contrasts, there is a wonderful agreement in the general type. The quaint and curious diversities that are presented by Georgian and Sart, Kalmuk and Eskimo, are only, as it were, the gay party-coloured fringing that surrounds the sober-hued web of the Russian nationality. As the rod of Aaron swallowed up the rods of the magicians of Egypt, so the Slav stock has absorbed Ugrian aborigines and Turk and Tartar immigrants, and seems little changed, except in bulk, by the process. The surroundings of the race have fostered their colonizing spirit. There has been

little to fasten them to their homes, and they have gone on and on in search of further conquest and happier fortunes. Their pioneers, so long as they saw no bounds to their horizon, have pushed steadily forward, hewing out for themselves new heritages in the forests of the north, and spreading their name and their creed over the steppe lands of the south. It is computed that sixty million of the inhabitants of the Russian Empire are of the Russian race. If their blood is not unmixed with foreign infusions, there can be no question of the force and purity of their national sympathies. At least, as large a proportion speak the Russian tongue and profess the national religion.

Here is a broad and solid basis for an empire's greatness to rest upon; capable, one would fancy, of sustaining almost any shock from without or from within. But the autocratic power that guides the destinies of Russia has not been content to retain it within its natural frontier. Military ambition and an unwise passion for aggrandizement have carried it into regions where, so far as can be seen, it can reap no permanent benefit, and where its presence arouses the suspicions of its neighbours. At the same time, the nation, stimulated by the great act of Serf Emancipation, is awakening to political life. It appears to be growing weary of parental government, and impatient of the myriad official bonds by which its freedom of action is controlled. It will by-and-by demand, and will obtain, a share in controlling its own destinies. Many fear that the awakening has come too early, before the nation has received its sight, and that if left to itself it will stumble forward, like a blind Samson, to a mysterious fate that will wreck its mighty strength.

At all events, Russia is approaching a crisis of its history which must intensify our interest in everything that concerns it. Old problems and new are waiting for solution on terms and on a scale never before witnessed. Despotism and Communism are in the same boat, and around them are the angry and rising waters of popular passion. It will be of interest as we pass from end to end of the vast Russian dominion, noting its present aspects and seeking to understand its present condition, to glance from time to time at the beginnings of this unique and portentous power, undoubtedly the rival, but by no means necessarily the opponent, of Britain, and to mark the process of development which has made it what it is.

CHAPTER II.

GREAT NOVGOROD AND ITS NEIGHBOURS.



THREE hundred versts—some two hundred miles—south-east of the city of St. Petersburg is a short range of hills which the Russians call the Valdai Mountains. They would not be mountains in any other country than Russia, for their summits rise little more than three hundred feet above the surrounding country. But these insignificant hills form the only elevated ground that breaks the immense plain that stretches from the Carpathian to the Ural range. They are important also as containing the sources of the great rivers that drain to the Baltic, the Black Sea, and the Caspian; and not far off is the low water-shed from which the Northern Dwina flows towards the White Sea and the Arctic Ocean.

The Valdai Hills, therefore, though they be little beside the mountain systems of Western Europe, play an important rôle. They form the *umbilicus* of Russia—its geographical centre, and the nucleus round which the early traditions and history of the Russian race are grouped. From its south-eastern skirts issues the Volga, flowing through the region where the Muscovite

Czarate first gathered strength. To the south rises the Dnieper, that runs under the historic old walls of Kiev,—a splendid seat of wealth and power when the site of Moscow was still a forest. Towards the west we come upon the head-waters of the Niemen, and to Lithuanian Russia, whose princes gave the law in Eastern Europe while the ancestors of the present Autocrat were bending humbly under the yoke of the Tartars. Standing on the bold bluffs of granite and quartz that on the north dominate the basin of Lake Ilmen, you look down upon a region perhaps still more full of ancient associations and historic interest. The eye takes in a wide view of forest, lake, and morass; of cultivated land, wooded knolls, and waste patches of sand, where, scattered far apart, the belfries of village churches, with the sun gilding their metal domes, peep out from among the pine trees or dot the banks of slow-flowing streams.

This is the province of Novgorod, the cradle of the Russian nationality. Even now the country seems only in course of being slowly reclaimed from a state of nature. But a thousand years ago the scene must have been rude indeed. This plain was then the most northerly and easterly outpost of the great Slav race. Here they dwelt surrounded on almost all sides by savage Finnish peoples—Tchuds, Vesses, and Merians; by still more ferocious Lithuanic tribes; exposed to incursions from the Scandinavian pirates, and divided among themselves by fierce feuds. They were scarcely less rude and barbarous than their neighbours. Like them they were heathens, worshipping Perun, the god of thunder; offering human sacrifices to the deities of the earth and air, and to the genii of the forests and swamps; and celebrating

the obsequies of their chief by burning his wives and slaves on the funeral pyre. They lived, the old chroniclers say, "like wild beasts;" but already they had begun to show their passion for agriculture, and their talent for colonizing and encroaching, and for absorbing weaker peoples. Slowly they were pushing forward, like a wedge, into the heart of the country, clearing spaces in the primeval woods in which to plant their scanty crops of grain and build their rude fortified villages. Already, favoured by their position on the head-waters of the navigable streams, they had begun to engage in commerce.

Ten centuries ago, perhaps, might have been seen from the most northern spurs of the Valdai Hills the wooden buildings of Novgorod—the "New Town"—situated on both sides of the Volkhov, after it issues from Lake Ilmen, to find its way to Lake Ladoga, and finally to the Gulf of Finland by the broad Neva; for already Novgorod was the metropolis of the nascent Russian state.

We begin then our survey of the Russian dominions, not at the east or the west, the north or the south, neither at the centre nor the extremities, but at the beginning. Every Russian at least knows that Novgorod Veliki—"Novgorod the Great"—is the birth-place and name-place of the nation. It is only some one hundred miles to the south-east of St. Petersburg; but the supercilious modern capital on the Neva has disdained to open a direct communication with the decayed old Slav metropolis on the Volkhov.

For, alas! it has sadly fallen from its former opulence and splendour; and the command of its trade is no longer a prize that is worth straining to catch.

Only the relics remain of the great city of half a million souls ; the head-quarters of Ruric and the "men of Rus;" the heart of the great republic which was the wonder of mediæval Europe. Railways, among other modern appliances of trade, have been largely introduced into Russia of late years ; but Novgorod has benefited little by them. The main route from St. Petersburg to Moscow does not make the small deviation necessary to embrace Novgorod in its course. It was the imperial will and pleasure of the late Czar Nicolas that this main railway, regarding the route of which engineers, contractors, and military men were engaged in endless squabbling, should be drawn as straight as a ruled line ; and Novgorod has had to be content with connecting herself with it by a small branch line. Such things can be done in Russia !

A longer but perhaps more interesting journey is that by which the traveller, leaving the railway fifty miles from St. Petersburg, proceeds in a small steamboat up the Volkhov, arriving probably late in the evening at the ancient town. The scenery through which he passes produces a feeling of novelty and strangeness, if he is making a first acquaintance with Russia ; but when the newness wears off, a still stronger sense of monotony begins to assert itself. It is not a land that charms you by its soft graces of outline and pleasing diversity of colour. You perceive somehow that you have left the familiar scenes of Europe, and yet are not in Asia.

The country is flat and featureless in contour, like a Tartar physiognomy, and yet preserves a Tartar harshness of expression. Nature seems to have intended it for a solitude ; but the hard needs of man have compelled

him to invade her sanctuary, and win his hard black bread with sweat and care.

Long as this portion of the empire has been occupied, it preserves the primitive air of an American settlement in the backwoods. This is partly due, no doubt, to the wooden materials of which the houses are built. Quarries of stone are few in that flat land, and the peasant throughout Russia builds his cabin of logs, employing brick where wood cannot be used. There is no permanence about these dwellings. The popular saying runs that "Russia is burned once every seven years." The strong ties of association that bind us in Western Europe to the home of childhood, fastening our affections, as it were, to very walls and stones, have not time to grow up there.

The moujik—the Russian peasant—feels himself more in the position of one who has set up his tent, than as having built a permanent shelter for himself and his children's children. From the earliest times, and in a certain sense still, he has held himself ready to abandon his patrimony, and shift farther into the wilderness: the passion for wandering has got into his blood. Whole populations, influenced by the oppression of their rulers, the dread of Tartar invasion, or golden reports of fertile and vacant lands ahead, were in the habit of leaving the older settled localities in a body and moving elsewhere. The wealth of the great proprietors depended less on the extent of their lands—of which there was never any lack—than on the number of hands there were to till them. Governments also could not afford to lose the main source of their revenue, the industrious peasantry, on whom their capitation tax and other

heavy state burdens mainly rested. Stern "ukases" were issued to stop the displacement of population; the tenants and dependants of the boyards, or great nobles, became bondsmen "attached to the glebe," bought and sold with the land, like the other chattels upon it; and the village communities had their rights to the grounds which they tilled in common legally recognized,—these rights, however, being then, and in some places still, regarded by the peasants and their masters as an onerous duty rather than as a valuable possession. In a word, serfage and the commune were established; and the Russian peasant of to-day is largely the product of these two remarkable institutions, the nature and the influence of which, however, form too wide and intricate a subject to be entered into here.

In the Novgorodian landscape, therefore, the tourist must not look for picturesqueness or fertility—at least in the northern and eastern parts of the province. In its best days it never was famous for its agricultural riches. Only a small part of it has ever been brought, or is likely to be brought, under the plough. With an area equal to that of England, the population of the government of Novgorod is little over a million. Much of it is still covered with the primeval pine woods, and alternating with these forest tracts are great undrained marshes and wide spaces of sandy plain. The desolate aspect of the scene is increased by the absence of the scattered farmsteads we associate with country life at home. A sociable and gregarious people, the blank solitude and oppressive silence of the great plains and dark forests appal and depress the Russian peasant farmers; and they love to draw their houses cozily together into some snug

hamlet or township for mutual protection and companionship.

The old pagan myths have still a strong hold on the minds of the simple peasantry, in spite of nearly a thousand years of Christianity; and in few places is more implicit faith placed in these venerable superstitions than in Novgorod. After nightfall a thousand unearthly and malign creatures are abroad. The were-wolf haunts the forest, and the foul vampire creeps from the sepulchre to slake his thirst for sweet young blood. Tales are whispered over the fire about the clumsy antics of the *domovoi*—the “brownie,” or familiar house-spirit—who takes up his quarters in empty barns and mills; of weird encounters with the *roussalka*, or wood-fairy; with the *leechie*, or forest-demon, who slinks sidelong through the undergrowth, dogging the steps of the traveller; and with the still more malignant *vodianoi*—the water-wraith, or kelpie—who delights in enticing the unwary to his home beneath the surface of the deep pool. There are well-defined traces of the heathen worship of the old Slavs in the village customs of to-day. Perun, the Russian Thor, has still homage paid to him in various ways; the aid of Mikonla, the ploughman, the personification, as has been suggested, of the intense love of the race for agriculture, is implored as often as that of the Christian saints; and the attributes of Did-Lado, the female deity who sends the refreshing rains of early summer, are inextricably mixed up with those of the Virgin Mary. On certain anniversaries the ancient tumuli—graves of the heroes of the Novgorodian cycle—and the ruins of the towns that in other days were wealthy and industrious seats of commerce, are visited by the

country people, and observances take place that are half a superstitious rite and half a touching commemoration of a mighty past which no native of "the great" Novgorod ever forgets.

The vestiges of the departed greatness of the old republic become more noticeable as, ascending the Volkhov, we approach the renowned city of Novgorod. Once, as has been said, it contained within its walls a population of 400,000, or, as some chroniclers say, 600,000. Now, it is a dwindling and forsaken little provincial town of some 17,000 inhabitants. The cincture of its old fortifications can still be traced, and bears witness to the immense strength of the walls and the enormous extent of the city, which in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries had its seventy "quarters," in which were congregated merchants from every part of Europe and Asia. Glancing round the sweep of the ancient walls, the Novgorod of to-day looks like a shrunken nut in its shell. Nothing remains of its old magnificence except the kremlin or citadel—a feature found in every Russian town of note—and the Cathedral of St. Sophia, with a few other ecclesiastical edifices. As of yore, the Volkhov divides the town into two parts. The "side of commerce," we have the assurance of Mr. Mackenzie Wallace, who spent a considerable time in Novgorod and its vicinity, is "eminently unpicturesque and thoroughly uninteresting"—wide, ill-paved, dirty streets running at right angles to each other, and lined with houses that, as is too often the case in Russia, have no pretension to regularity or architectural effect.

Crossing to the right bank by the bridge which has often played an important part in Novgorodian history,

you find several things worthy of attention, especially by one acquainted with the city's past. The kremlin faces you, surrounded by its high battlemented wall of brick, above which rise the spiry summits of the citadel itself, consisting of bulging cupolas, surmounted by slender pinnacles in the usual Russian taste. The cathedral church is a quaint-looking building, erected more than eight hundred years ago, when architecture was in its infancy in these Northern regions. Its blind walls and massive structure bear evident token that the thrifty citizens looked forward in building it to the time when the sanctuary would be used as a magazine of war materials, and a strong place of defence in the day of civic broil or foreign attack. In spite of the secular uses to which it has been put, the ancient church is deservedly looked upon with unusual reverence; for does it not contain, in addition to miracle-working images and relics, the bones of St. Vladimir, the first Russian prince who favoured Christianity, and of Mstislaf the Brave of Smolensk, who, with his son Mstislaf the Bold, were the great defenders of the city against Lithuanian, Tartar, and Muscovite aggression? On the walls are curious old frescoes of the twelfth century; and on the canopy overhead is painted a gigantic figure of Christ, with the arms outstretched in the act of blessing the city, which is popularly believed to show signs of rejoicing or of grief at every great change in the fortunes of Novgorod.

Close by the old cathedral is a wide-open public place, and in the middle of this stands the monument erected in 1862 in commemoration of the "millennium" of the Russian nationality, an event much more grandly celebrated by the serf emancipation of the year previous.

The monument is described as a colossal pedestal of stone, surmounted by an enormous globe, round which are grouped figures emblematical of Russian history. On this spot, more than a thousand years ago, the Varangian Ruric and his "men of Rus" set up their standard, and took possession of the town. According to the old chroniclers, whose story is generally accepted as based on historic fact, these "men of Rus" were Scandinavian rovers—from Roslagen, in Sweden, it is thought—of that race of Vikings who then infested all European seas, conquering and founding states in England, Normandy, the Low Countries, and Sicily, and pillaging even the shores of Greece and the islands of the *Ægean*.

These bold and enterprising Norsemen, who dared the perils of the Greenland seas in search of spoil and adventure, and are believed by some to have actually visited America five hundred years before Columbus, were scarcely likely to overlook the growing Slav power on the Volkhov. At that period the Slavs, the last of the Aryan races to arrive in Europe, were partly settled, as they are to-day, as far to the south-west as the Adriatic; but Novgorod, as we have said, was their farthest limit to the north-east. There, tired of the constant wars with Finns and Livs, and anxious to devote themselves to trade and agriculture, they called in Ruric, with his Norse followers, to be their head and protector. He found the town defended by its earthen wall, surmounted by a wattled palisade, the highest development of Slav fortification at the time; and he built on the site of the present kremlin a feudal stronghold that could bid defiance to the savages. Ruric is the ancestor of most of the princely personages that

figure in subsequent Russian history, and his *droujina*—his retainers or henchmen, men that to the early Slavs appeared “tall as pine trees and fierce as bears”—were the founders of the great families of boyards who for so many centuries have had things nearly all their own way in Russia.

If Ruric proved himself a King Stork to his subjects, they had much to thank him for; and by-and-by, when his descendants moved to fairer and more fertile regions in the south, the citizens were left very much to their own devices. For, as has been hinted, the importance of Novgorod depends not on its agricultural riches,—in that respect it is poor,—but on its commanding geographical position. Holding the key of the Valdai Hills, it had water communication with rivers draining to the Baltic, the White Sea, the Caspian, and the Euxine. By the Volkhov the Novgorodians descended to Lake Ladoga and the Gulf of Finland; and by the same route they could also make their way with little difficulty to the shores of the Arctic Sea. They descended the great river Volga, which in all times has been the commercial highway of Russia, and were the carriers of merchandise between Europe and the distant East. Their neighbourhood to the sources of the Niemen and Dwina and of the Dnieper brought them into communication on the one hand with the Germans, and on the other with the Greeks of the Eastern Empire.

Every year Novgorod grew in wealth and population, till in the fourth and fifth centuries after its occupation by Ruric it had reached the apex of its glory. Christianity had been introduced by Vladimir the Saint, great-grandson of Ruric, and the pagan observances had been

abolished, and the old beliefs expelled or transmuted into new superstitions.

A turbulent and a pious city was the Novgorod of those days. Its civil and its religious freedom went hand in hand. The citizens chose as the head of the republic some prince of the House of Ruric from a neighbouring state; but they did not allow him to govern, and they exacted an oath from him that he would conserve all the rights and privileges granted them by their great benefactor Jaroslav, son of Vladimir, the Charlemagne of Russia, who built the church of St. Sophia. The prince led their armies in the numerous wars against the Finns, Lithuanians, and Poles, or with the neighbouring republic of Pskov. Very often they turned their weapons against himself, and ejected him with little ceremony when he did not please them. The Metropolitans of Novgorod would acknowledge no ecclesiastic dependence on Kiev or on Moscow. Had not the Church of St. Sophia also its wonder-working images and its sainted bones? Were they not Novgorodians, who would not doff their caps to any Muscovite or Little Russian? Everything was done by popular vote, and by the convocation of the notables, under their *possadnik* or burgomaster, gathered either in the cathedral or in the Court of Jaroslav beyond the river. When this assembly was sitting, or when public strife and clamour were raging, the great bell was rung. Sometimes it pealed forth for seven days without ceasing. It was the sonorous voice of the republic, whom the citizens proudly termed "My lord Novgorod the Great." "Who," they said, "can resist God and great Novgorod?"

Under these free institutions its commercial importance developed in a wonderful manner. Novgorod became, in the words of the writers of the time, "a prodigiously large city." Its territory was more extensive than that of the Venetian Republic. Its "Good Companions," as the bands of adventurers called themselves, sailed down the Volkhov in their light craft, and made their way by lake, marsh, and stream to the White Sea and the base of the Ural Mountains. They reduced to submission the vast territories comprehended in the modern governments of Archangel, Vologda, and Olonetz; founded a new republic in Viatka, between the Volga and the Kama; and penetrated far into Siberia. When they came near to a town, they did not stop to inquire whether its inhabitants were Christian or pagan, but made war upon it as a matter of course. Deeply religious men they were, too, after their own notions. They prayed fervently before attacking a sleeping village, and set up a cross on the blood-stained ashes. Little better than pirates, perhaps, were these pious swash-bucklers, though in that respect they differed not from all the pioneers of their time. But they were bold, fearless, enterprising men, who laid wide and deep the foundations of the Russian power, and added enormously to the wealth and consequence of Novgorod.

The wealth of the great republic was the cause of its downfall. It excited the cupidity of the Poles and Lithuanians. But more dangerous than all was the growing power of the principality of Moscow. Time after time it repelled the Grand Princes; but possessing as they did the rich grain-lands of the Volga, they had the power of starving it into terms. Great plagues and

which had just been discovered—where, of course, they all perished miserably. The old privileges of the city were taken away. It fell afterwards into the hands of the Poles and the Swedes; but it never recovered from the terrible treatment the two Ivans meted out to it. The neighbourhood of St. Petersburg has shorn it of some of the few attractions that a Russian country town affords, and it is now the dreariest of provincial capitals.

Its crops of rye, buckwheat, and hemp, above all, its forests, now furnish the chief wealth of the province of Novgorod. The great lakes Ilmen and Bielo are well stored with fish; and in the numerous ponds and lake-lets of the Valdai district, acclimatized salmon, and the still more aristocratic sterlet, are reared, and the fishermen make a comfortable living by conveying these to the St. Petersburg and Moscow markets. In the recesses of these hills are many charming glens and wooded nooks, where we come upon the quaint villages of the natives of these parts—a race by themselves, famed for the good looks of their women, their curious custom of painting the neck and hands blue, red, and black, and for their manufacture of savoury cracknels and great bells; and the scenery has a diversity of aspect rarely seen in Novgorod, or, for that matter, in Russia.

Neighbours of Novgorod, and lying respectively west, east, and south of the Valdai Hills, are three provinces—Pskov, Tver, and Smolensk—that illustrate the progressive stages of the history of Russia, and varying phases of the national life. In the economic condition of Pskov and Tver may be traced the fickle ebb and flow of the currents of trade in the course of centuries.

The city of Pskov is a thousand years old, and boasts of being the birth-place of the Princess Olga, daughter-in-law of Ruric, and the first Christian convert in the ruling family of Russia. It was once the head of a republic, and the commercial rival of Great Novgorod. It, too, had its massive kremlin, its cathedral—not to mention one hundred and fifty smaller churches—its important wars, and its alliances with Lithuanians and Poles, and with the Grand Princes of Kiev and Moscow. Pskov called herself the "younger sister" of Novgorod; and the two republics quarrelled with each other in a way that was anything but sisterly. The Pskovians also spoke of their city as "the Great," and prefixed to it the style of *Gospodin*—"my lord." The period of its decay, as of its greatness, was contemporary with the decline and fall of Novgorod; and the causes also were identical.

Pskov has, however, sunk to an estate lower, if possible, even than her ancient rival. The modern town has some twelve thousand odd inhabitants. It is a squalid and desolate-looking place, with narrow miry streets lined with rickety wooden houses. The line of railway from St. Petersburg to Warsaw passes it at some little distance, having disdained to move a few miles aside to touch the old emporium. It has a certain consequence as the seat of a provincial government, and it preserves a few vestiges of its leather and furniture industries. The annual fair, the "Great Town" and the "Middle Town" quarters still remain; and its churches, sixty in number, are more than sufficient for the needs of the people. The old ramparts, that often repelled the Teutonic Knights, are crumbling away: "the street boys,"

says M. Rambaud, "amuse themselves by flinging the stones into the Pskova to frighten the laundresses." But on fête days, when the great bell booms from the Cathedral of the Trinity, where rest the bones of the best-beloved princes of Pskov—Vsevolod, Gabriel, and Dovmont the Lithuanian—and is answered in less deep notes from the belfries of its numerous churches, a phantom of its past splendour seems still to linger above the decayed old town. A more abiding lustre, perhaps, attaches to Pskov in that it has given to Russia the greatest of her poets—Alexander Pushkin.

The district of Pskov is even poorer than Novgorod in agricultural resources, and the people are more primitive in their ways. With an area nearly as large as that of the kingdom of the Netherlands, its population only numbers three quarters of a million. The soil is flat and sandy, and much of the surface is covered with swamp and forest. At Pskov the Pskova river joins the Velikaia, and a little farther down the united stream falls into Lake Pskov, which again is a prolongation of the great Lake Peipus, whose flat shores of sedge and sand, two hundred miles in circuit, are, however, chiefly within the neighbouring governments of Livonia and St. Petersburg. A busy current of commerce sweeps round its skirts, but Pskov itself is in a backwater, where few influences from the outer world penetrate. The ancient Slav customs and family organization are found here in pristine simplicity. The costume of the women has changed little since the days of Olga. The maidens still bind a broad ribbon across their heads, that after marriage is replaced by a linen band, and wear round their necks a kerchief brodered with glass beads which

is removed at the altar. The wide-sleeved sarafan, or gown, fastened behind from top to bottom with metal bangles, the mitten of sheepskin edged with sable, and the strong shoes lined with wool, are articles of dress that have altered little in fashion for many centuries.

The housewife, respected and consulted as the manager and director of in-door affairs throughout Russia, is regarded in Pskov, perhaps more than elsewhere, as the absolute power at the family hearth, to whose behests daughters-in-law and children, and even sons and husband, must pay implicit attention within her own especial domain. The food of this primitive folk, as may be imagined, includes few foreign delicacies. Black rye bread—the “staff of life” throughout Russia—cabbage soup, curdled milk and potatoes, occasionally oat-cakes, cheese, butter, and eggs, these meet all their simple wants, if we add draughts of *kavass* (beer made from the aforesaid black bread), or stronger potions, if procurable, of *vodka* (rye spirit). Ordinarily, however, the Russian peasant is a frugal and contented fellow, with whom a little luxury—a spoonful of gravy to enrich his daily mess, or a glass of home-brewed beer to wash it down—goes a long way. Even when in liquor he is seldom or never quarrelsome, but rather, perhaps, inclined to be demonstratively affectionate. The peasantry of Novgorod and Pskov, in spite of their simple fare, have long been noted for their well-grown, sturdily-knit figures, and many of the female population have regular features and pleasing expressions. They have a staidness and dignity of deportment, amounting almost to austerity, that contrasts strongly with the light, volatile, and impulsive demeanour of the Polish and Little Russian

people to the south, and which may, in part at least, be attributed to their still unextinguished pride in their ancient republican independence and power.

Unlike Novgorod and Pskov, Tver is on one of the main arteries of Russian trade. The chief town of the old principality is a considerable and a rising place. Czar Nicolas's "straight line" of rail happened to hit it, and helped to build its fortunes. It has still only some thirty thousand inhabitants, but it is an entrepôt for the grain from the fertile corn-lands of the south on its way to the capital. It has its theatre, its public parks and drives, its busy working population, its lively provincial society, and even its small literary coterie. Of course it has its kremlin and its cathedral, in which are the bones of the sainted Prince Michael, basely murdered in 1319 at the court of the Tartar Khan of Kazan, by George Danielovitch of Moscow, with whose family the princes of Tver disputed for a century subsequently the possession of the grand principality and the precedence among Russian states. Like other Russian towns, Tver has often suffered by fire, and has profited by the disaster. To a terrible conflagration in 1763, that burned the city to the ground, it owes its present regularity of design and its broad and straight thoroughfares.

Few parts of the empire present such a scene of animation and active industry as the government of Tver. The nobles have the reputation of being among the most advanced and liberal of the Russian aristocracy in their ideas and in their treatment of their tenantry and dependants. The result of this is seen in the superior industry robustness and contentment of the Tverian

peasantry. The winter time is the period when business and labour are at their briskest. Tver owes its importance to its position on the sources of the Volga, and the products of the immense region of which that river is the commercial artery are here drawn to a focus. Vast stores of grain—wheat, rye, oats, barley, and pease—and of wool, hemp, flax, and other raw material, are constantly arriving for storage or for transport to the manufacturing countries to the west. Tver itself is not noted for its agricultural riches. It has the same rigorous climate and poor soil as Novgorod and Pskov; like them, it is within the “zone of forest.” Its timber is, indeed, one of its great sources of riches. Thousands of its population are engaged in the work of wood-cutting, rafting, and saw-milling. The felled trunks of oak and larch are dragged over the snow to the banks of the rivers, whence, as soon as the ice melts, they are floated down-stream to spots where thousands of saws are busy cutting up the rough logs into beams, battens, and deals for shipment to Western Europe. Altogether, a more active and yet more peaceful scene, one more indicative of vigorous life in the present and of promise for the future, can hardly be witnessed within the Czar’s possessions than that to be seen within his faithful province of Tver.

Travelling southwards, and leaving the Valdai Hills behind us, we enter a district famous for the great events that have happened within it in modern as well as in medieval times—Smolensk. The Varangians followed this route on their way from the Volkhov to the Lower Dnieper; but they saw little in these cold, swampy

forest-clad flats to tempt them to linger when the sunny, smiling plains of the Ukraine lay before them. As soon, however, as the early Russian State began to break up into principalities, Smolensk began to assert its importance. It contains the upper waters of the Dnieper and the heads of the valleys of the Dwina and the Moskva—streams draining into three seas.

The commercial advantages of this position have in all times been overshadowed by its military importance. It was the debatable land between Novgorod and Kiev, and later between Moscow and Lithuania. On this field have been fought out the great contests between Poland and Russia—between Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy—in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and it was a scene of the prolonged struggle between Czar Peter and the Alexander of the North—Charles the Twelfth of Sweden. Through it lies the direct road to Moscow and the heart of Russia. On its soil were fought, in that “memorable year,” 1812, some of the most murderous battles that marked Napoleon’s advance on the capital; and its snow-covered ways and obscure hamlets witnessed the hideous scenes of suffering and vengeance enacted during the retreat of that terrible winter. The sites of a thousand desperate fights, still famous or sunk in oblivion, are thickly sprinkled over the surface of Smolensk; and the mouldering bones of combatants of a score of different races—Turk, Tartar, and Finn, Lithuanian, Pole, and Russ, German, Swede, and Frenchman—fatten its lean soil. It is, in fact, the battle-field of Russia, the scene above all others where she has won her unity and independence from foreign control; and the Russians are not oblivious to the fact,

as the memorial on the scene of the sanguinary struggle at Borodino—which, however, is just outside of the boundary of Smolensk—serves, among many other proofs, to show. They complain that "space is their great enemy;" but here they must admit that it proved their saviour, when their courage, their numbers, their military skill, and the lavish expenditure of their blood, availed them not.

The old city of Smolensk, the capital of the government, has associations that are in fit keeping with the warlike history of the province. It is built on the banks of the Dnieper, and is admirably situated for trade; but its prosperity has been too often staked on the chances of a battle for it to have had an unbroken career of good fortune. Its kremlin, washed by the waters of the river, often destroyed and rebuilt, is still the most prominent building in the town. The remains of the massive walls, thirty feet high, fifteen feet thick, and two miles in circuit, which were long believed to render Smolensk impregnable, still exist. In the days of the Mstislafs—the "Brave" and the "Bold"—the principality on the Upper Dnieper protected Novgorod, and spread its conquests as far as Halitch (modern Galicia), of which the younger Mstislaf died the ruler. But the growing power of Moscow in the east absorbed Smolensk as it absorbed Novgorod. It was an appanage of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania when, in 1514, Vassili, son of Ivan the Great and father of Ivan the Terrible, besieged it, battered down the "impregnable" ramparts of the kremlin with his great guns, and entered the city amid the rejoicing of the people, who were tired of Polish supremacy.

of Russian cities. A hundred years later, in the "time of the troubles," when the old male line of Ruric had been exhausted, and before the present family of the Romanoffs were seated in their place, Smolensk was again taken by the Poles after a long and bloody resistance; but it was won back by the Czar Alexis, son of Michael Romanoff, in 1654.

Its last and most terrible experience was in 1812, when the "grand army" of nearly half a million of men, led by the greatest military genius of modern times, burst over the frontiers of Russia and pursued its conquering way towards Moscow. It was in attempting to cover Smolensk that the Russian army under Barclay de Tolly and Bragation was beaten and driven back in the sanguinary battles of the 14th, 17th, and 19th of August. Other three days sufficed to carry the town, though garrison and inhabitants fought with the fury of patriotic and religious zeal, and the battered walls of the kremlin and the blazing streets were drenched with the blood of twenty thousand dead. Great were the rejoicings of the conquerors, while the city was abandoned to pillage, and marauding parties wasted the country around, more especially after the patriot host, making its final stand near the Moskva, at Borodino, was again repulsed with fearful carnage, thirty thousand Frenchmen and forty thousand Russians being piled in heaps on the field of battle.

It was a ruinous triumph, as was seen three months later. When the remnants of the victorious army, fleeing from the smouldering ruins of Moscow, pursued not only by the avenging Russians, but by still more remorseless enemies—cold and hunger—re-entered the deserted streets

of Smolensk, they found there no comfort, no supplies, no resting-place from persecution, scarcely even shelter for the thousands of sick and wounded. Footsore and famishing they had to continue their weary way through a country which their own hands had utterly wasted, turning at bay at intervals to repel the attacks of the relentless foe ; massacred by the infuriated peasantry when any of them straggled behind ; numbed to the bones by the Arctic cold, and seeing no speck in the white expanse of the snow-covered plain except the ravens that flapped slowly in their rear, and no hope of escape but in the grave. It was here, in a word, where was enacted one of the greatest tragedies of modern times—where a mass of living valour and military strength such as has seldom been brought together was utterly wrecked and dissipated in space, and a mighty reputation received a fatal wound. Is it strange that stories of this eventful time cling to every by-way and thicket in the environs of Smolensk, and along the broad track followed by the retreating French army ; that they are told over, with marvellous additions, by the village firesides ; and that the deeds of the patriot troops, of the Cossack horsemen, and of the peasant volunteers, should be mixed up with the exploits of the earlier heroes of the race ?

Smolensk is not only the most celebrated, but—with the exception of Viazma, one hundred miles to the eastward, where also a battle was fought between the Russians and the French—the only important town of a government which contains over a million of souls spread over twenty-one thousand square miles of territory. The new city, partly built of stone, which has risen on

the ashes of the old wooden one, contains some handsome public buildings, including the large allowance of churches which we find in every Russian town.

Besides a cathedral, with the archbishop's palace, there are Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches for the unorthodox Christians; and monasteries, colleges, a military school for the nobles, assembly rooms, and other institutions required by an advanced civilization. It retains the control of a large transport business in grain on its way to the Baltic ports; and also a considerable manufacturing trade in carpets, linen goods, soap, and leather. Altogether, Smolensk, with its twenty-five thousand inhabitants, is a place of some little activity and enterprise; and if it has not the stir and bustle of Tver, it has still less resemblance to the forsaken and decaying streets of Novgorod and Pskov. But for generations to come the chief interest which the city and the government must present to the tourist will be the traces they contain of the ruinous tempests of war that have so often swept over them in the past.

CHAPTER III.

LITTLE RUSSIA AND KIEV.



WHEN the extreme southern frontier of Smolensk is crossed, we are in Little Russia. The "zone of forests" is left behind; the fat grainlands of Tchernigov and the Dnieper valley are around us, and the green rolling prairies of the Ukraine in front. The transformation from the lowering gloom of Smolensk to the "favoured land" of Little Russia is like the change from the dark and dolorous scene that closes the dramatic part of a pantomime to the gay frolic and brilliancy of the harlequinade. There is a change in latitude, in elevation, and in soil. We seem transported from the climate of Sweden to that of Southern France.

From a region where the frost binds up the marshes and the snow keeps its chill hand on the ground until far into April, a day or two's march has brought the traveller to a land where the cottages are buried under the blossom of peach and apricot trees, where the grape ripens in the open air, and where tobacco is grown for export. The heavy drapery of the forest has disappeared—not suddenly, but by degrees. Oak, ash, and lime trees mingle with the dark evergreen of

the fir and spruce ; the woods become thinner and more scattered, and the last sentinels of the great "Northern Host" of pines are left behind. There are heavily timbered patches in Tchernigov, and in the northern parts of Kiev there are still fine tracts of woodland, but farther south are the boundless, treeless steppe-lands.

In great level spaces, or in gentle undulations, like a sea rocking itself to rest after a tempest, the country stretches away until sky and horizon meet in a hardly discernible line. In spring and summer it is an ocean of verdure, the vivid green starred by flowers of every hue, and scattered over with large herds of sheep and cattle ; in autumn, a bare brown waste of burned-up pastures ; and in winter, a white, unsullied expanse of snow. Human habitations do not make a great figure in the landscapes of the Ukraine. The Cossack plants his *hata* under the lee of some swell in the surface, or by the margin of a stream where his flocks can be watered during the parching droughts of the summer. A group of oak or walnut trees, guarded with extreme care, helps to shelter his snug little home, with the garden, cattle enclosures, and other outhouses grouped around it ; and the biting blasts of the north and the hot breath of the desert pass over his humble roof without disturbing his tranquillity of mind. The wide rim of his horizon is the boundary of his world, and in spite of many drawbacks he finds it not an unpleasant place to dwell in.

For Little Russia is inhabited by a people who are the true children of its sunny skies, rich soil, and open, breezy plains. They speak a dialect that differs considerably from that of the Great Russia to the north and north-east of them. They dwell in a land that yields its

fruits not grudgingly and sparingly, but with lavish hand, and almost spontaneously. They are not less fond of agricultural work than their neighbours, but they have more opportunity for play. They are Slavs of the Slavs. The buoyancy of temperament—the *insouciance*—which carries the Russian through so many of the trials that fall to his hard lot, is possessed in a special degree by the peasant cultivators of Kiev and Poltava; but while elsewhere it may be set down to stolidity, here it can only be attributed to light-hearted gaiety of spirits.

Neither in intermittent devotion to labour, nor in luxurious appreciation of the delights of idleness when the working hours are over, is he a whit behind his brother peasant of the forests; but while the latter loves to revel in the close warmth of his smoky hut, the Little Russian can take his ease in the open air. His history, his descent, his religious feelings and political sympathies, like his mother tongue, are not identical with those of his Muscovite compatriot; and he is keenly alive to the fact. He draws, indeed, a broader distinction than is perhaps warranted by the facts, and “cocks his beaver” with disdain at races that can lay less claim to purity of blood and superiority of physique. He knows that the Great Russia of the northern forests and eastern wastes is but a colony of his own beautiful land; that it was from this nest on the Dnieper that the vast swarm hived off that has covered the half of Europe and the half of Asia, just as our little Britain of the seas is the original home of the race that has colonized the “Greater Britain” of America and Australia.

If Novgorod was the beginning of the political power of Russia, Kiev is the birth-place of her religion and

her literature. And the Kievian, like the Novgorodian, does not forget the days that are past. The old capital is still the capital of his country to him—much the same as the Scotsman regards Edinburgh as the capital of his native land. The ancient glory of Kiev touches his imagination more quickly perhaps than the later power of Moscow; the honour and advancement of the Slav race and tongue are often nearer to his heart than the aggrandizement of Russia. So the "Panslavic" idea—the notion of uniting all the Slavonian peoples, in Turkey and Austria as well as in Russia, in one great and irresistible confederation—has a special allurements for the Little Russian. The wild Nihilist theories also—the recoil from the hard and fast bonds of absolutism—have found a most fertile field for propagation in the old home of the Slavs. The revolutionary seed has not only been thickly sown among the students at the universities of Kiev and Kharkov, but is discoverable, it is said, even in the professorial staff.

But whatever dangerous combustibles are hidden in the Little Russian's bosom, his daily life bears little sign of their presence. The brightness of the Slav temperament has not been dimmed, as in the north, by melancholic infusions from aboriginal Finnish stocks. His affinities, so far as they are not purely Slavonic, are rather with the Greek and the Tartar. His quick, artistic impulses, his inflammable enthusiasm, have been stimulated by Hellenic impulses from the Black Sea and Byzantium, and the Tartar admixtures of centuries have helped to inspire him with an almost savage love of outside nature, of personal freedom, and of war. In the very looks and costume, and much more in the manner

of life, of the peasant of the Ukraine, are reminiscences of his long and troublous relations with Turk and Mongol nomads. There are Tartar traits in the type of his features and in his dark hair and eyes. He is one of those who "love to lie i' the sun;" and the sun has left its kiss on the brown cheek, and kindled some of its fiery fervour in his nature. From choice, he would sleep rather under the stars than within doors; and there are traces of the magic and mystery of the summer night in his wayward fancies. For the rest, we see a tall and sturdy figure, firmly knit by a life of toil and outdoor exercise from childhood up.

If to be merry is to be wise, then the shepherds of the "frontier" and the peasantry of the Black Lands of the Dnieper are among the sages of the earth. Jest, raillery, quick repartee, are as the breath of their nostrils; song, dance, and music have for them irresistible attractions. A vein of poetry, not deep perhaps, but widely spread, runs through this race. Their land is the oldest and chosen home of Russian folk-lore, where snatches of lyrical ballad and strains of improvised melody still spring spontaneously from the hearts of the peasantry. Their tastes are shown in their love for flowers, their success in bee-keeping, and their skill in the training of orchard and forest trees. The humblest little garden, where the cottar grows his pot-herbs, bears witness of an artistic eye to colour and effect. The very arrangement of the houses in the rustic hamlet tells of the exercise of individual taste, instead of the mere copying of old models or next-door neighbours. Picturesque grouping takes the place of dull and ugly uniformity of straight lines.

The interiors of the houses do not belie the outsides

In the Ukraine, the *hata* in which a young couple are to take up their abode is "run up" almost with as much ease as the Kirghiz nomad pitches his black felt tent, and the walls are not much more substantial. All the neighbours assist, the women plastering on the clay when the men are driving the stakes and plaiting the tough withes that form the skeleton framework of the future home. Within there are manifest signs of that imitative talent in carving, painting, and decoration which is the heirloom of the Russian, and which with the dwellers by the Dnieper becomes almost an original gift. On the floor, on the sides and front of the indispensable oven—which, as elsewhere in Russia, is also the family hot bath, and often the family sleeping-place—are often artistic scrolls and tracery of flowers, foliage, and figures. High on the wall to the left of the entrance, opposite the great stove, are ranged the "household gods"—figures of Virgin and saint curiously wrought and gilded—to which the inmates pay devout attention, garnishing the family shrine with flowers in their seasons, and other little marks of reverential awe. The Little Russian, as becomes his history, is a stout champion of Orthodoxy, carrying his zeal often to the extent of dissent from the established religion, as relaxing from the strict letter of ancient dogma and form. Saint-days and other Church festivals, of which there are an enormous number in the year, do not fail to receive due observance; and the "name-day" of each member of the household is an anniversary on which piety and inclination alike call upon them to make merry with their friends. Nor are more secular feasts forgotten. Among a people so social and joyous, a very slight occasion, or no occasion what-

and in agriculture, who worshipped a sword stuck into the earth, and quaffed their wine from the skulls of their enemies killed in battle? Did some annihilating catastrophe overtake them that the ghost of their name no longer stalks on the earth? Were they a Hunnish race, the ancestors of those whom Attila led westward? were they allied to the Goths, who are also first seen emerging from this region to assist in the wild work of upturning the Roman world? or were they the original Slavs, over whom these human hurricanes swept without destroying? Let ethnologists say. What we know is that a millennium ago, when Ruric and his brethren were consolidating their power over the Slavs of the Volkhov — building fortresses at Novgorod, on Lake Ladoga, and on the “White Lake” far to the north-eastward, and “exploiting” the country of Pskov and Smolensk—other tribes of the same race (the Polians and Severians), as happily situated for trade, and more fortunate in soil and climate, were settled in the pleasant and fertile lands of the Dnieper, and that their metropolis, Kiev, placed on a high site on the right bank of the river, a little way below its junction with the Desna, was already coming into notice.

Within its earthen ramparts a strange medley of men of different nations were gathered together about the time when the Saxon king Alfred reigned in England. Bulgarians from the Volga, where a powerful kingdom had been founded; Khazars, whose extensive empire, stretching along the northern shores of the Black Sea and as far as the Caspian, was renowned in those days for its opulence and civilization; Tartars from the steppes; Jews from the Crimea: and Rumanvos from

the Danube, the descendants of the legionaries of ancient Dacia, who still spoke the tongue of imperial Rome,—met on common ground at Kiev, drawn thither by the fame of its growing commerce. Fiercely-whiskered Poles and big, unkempt, skin-clad Lithuanians descended the Pripet or the Dnieper, to barter the raw produce of their marshes and plains for luxuries from the Greek colonies on the Euxine or from Byzance. Religion had not yet set a great gulf between these western members of the Sarmatian stock and their Slav hosts at Kiev; nor had it established a bond of union between the latter and the smooth-mannered, supple-tongued strangers who came all the way from the Bosphorus and the *Ægean*, to display in the markets of Kiev their raiment of purple and fine linen, their wondrous stuffs of silk and gold brocade, their gay horse-trappings and keen-tempered weapons. Polian and Severian, Lett and Finn, Pole and Goth were alike pagan—bowing down to idols of stock and stone, and dabbling their altars with the blood of human sacrifices. But to the gates of Kiev one day came two humble monks of Byzantium—Cyril and Methodius—bearing in their hands two memorable gifts—the Greek Orthodox religion and the Greek alphabet. That was one of the great turning-points in Russian history; an event that has perhaps influenced the national destiny and character, and especially the destiny and character of Kiev, more than any other. Thenceforth the Russia beyond the Dnieper was bound to alien Constantinople by a triple strand of religion, literature, and policy, and drifted ever into more violent antagonism to the cognate race of Poland.

But before the ninth century was out Kiev received

other guests whose visit was scarcely less fateful. A Varangian band—a freebooting party of adventurers on a raid from Novgorod—descended the Dnieper, and set up here a new Norse principality. Its leader, Askold, whose tomb is still shown at Kiev, was not of the “blood of the princes,” however; and not long after came Oleg, brother and successor of Ruric, taking Smolensk on his way. It was when this rude northern barbarian saw the beauty and the fertility of these southern lands, and especially when he looked upon the commanding site and imposing towers of its chief town, that he uttered the words which the Kievians are not likely to forget—“Let Kiev be the mother of Russian cities.”

The Kiev of to-day is not, like its old northern rivals Novgorod and Pskov, a melancholy wreck of a great past, though in its time it has suffered even more than they have from war and fire. It is still a stately and handsome city of sixty thousand or seventy thousand souls; and in Russia, where the tendency of the population seems to be rather to spread abroad than to gather towards centres, that is considered an immense number of inhabitants. The cradle of Orthodoxy, it is still in a sense the religious centre of the nation—the “most holy place” in Holy Russia. Beautiful for situation, and commandingly placed for trade, it has not neglected to improve its charms by means of modern art, nor to avail itself of modern science in developing its commercial prosperity.

From whatever side we approach it, the first view of Kiev, like that of many other Russian towns that are less able to bear inspection from within, is strik-

ingly picturesque and imposing. Colour, form, and magnitude, the traces of ancient splendour and of modern energy, are all present to impress the traveller that he is gazing on a spot that is not unworthy to be the bourn of the pilgrimages of a vast and widely-spread nation. The broad channel of the inconstant Dnieper flows under the walls, and from its left bank some of the finest views of the city are obtained. The turbid current, the wide beds of shingle which the stream leaves as it alters its course with each flood, the precipitous rocky wall where the Petschersk quarter and Old Kiev abut on the river, are in fine contrast with the gleaming white towers, the dark red of the brick buildings, the vivid green of the trees sprinkled along the banks or grouped in lines and masses in the streets and public places, and the dazzling sheen of the silvern and golden cupolas that everywhere rear their heads.

Let this be seen in bright summer weather, when fifty thousand pilgrims from every part of the empire are gathered in the Holy City, when a brilliant blue shines overhead, and when the conical hills that rise here and there above the mass of buildings and foliage, with their green slopes, and summits crowned with churches and monuments, seem in the dry clear atmosphere preternaturally close at hand, and it will be acknowledged that the glory of Kiev has not wholly departed.

The chief interest of the city, however, lies in its associations with the past. As we walk through the streets of the old town, situated on the high ground to the north, it is almost possible to read its former fortunes in its stones; its historic sites are as so many tide-marks that show the rise and progress of early Russia. On the

summit of the Kopirev-Konets—one of the gigantic masses of rock that tower above the river—was the Pantheon of the heathen Slavs. The altar of Perun, the great war-god, was reared on the spot now occupied by the Church of St. Basil. Under its shadow the first descendants of Ruric—Oleg, Igor, and Sviatoslav—equipped the expeditions with which they harried the shores of the Euxine and the cities of Greece, conquered the countries of the Danube, and hung their shields at the “Golden Gate” of Constantinople. Here, too, on their return, they threw down the choice of their spoils and trophies before their gods.

A small Christian community had lived here in fear and trembling since the days of the monk Cyril; and the Princess Olga, when she became a convert to the faith, hardly dared avow it to the rough boyards. But one fine day, about the year 1000, the Grand-Prince Vladimir, after a stormy life of war and debauchery, bethought him of selecting a new religion; and the choice fell on that of his grandmother Olga, whose grave is shown in the Church of the Nativity. Perun the Thunderer was thrown down from his seat of honour, flogged, dragged ignominiously at a horse's tail, and trundled down the steep bank into the Dnieper. A little way down, say the chroniclers, Perun drifted ashore, and the people were ready to worship the miracle; but Vladimir's men pushed the image out again into mid-current. At the foot of the high ground at the river-side is pointed out the Fountain of Baptism, where the imperious grand-prince hustled his family and his people into the bosom of Holy Church, and renamed them, in batches of hundreds, after the saints of the Greek calendar. The Em-

peror Nicolas erected on the spot an obelisk of stone, one hundred and fifty feet in height, in memory of the event.

Many relapses followed this wholesale conversion. It was long ere the inhabitants quite gave up their faith in the old gods, if indeed it is yet wholly departed; but as Perun floated slowly away from Kiev, so paganism drifted out of the hearts of the Russian people.

Another monument of the piety of St. Vladimir was the ancient Church of the Tithe, to the endowment of which he devoted one-tenth of his revenues. Still more splendid, however, were the memorials left by his successor, Jaroslav the Great, under whom Kiev reached the summit of its grandeur; and chief of all is the Cathedral of St. Sophia, modelled after that famous church of the same name in the city of Constantine, which for so many centuries has been used as a Moslem mosque. Its great tower rises in four stages high above the other buildings of the city; its golden cupolas blaze like suns over the massive pile. "Within," says M. Rambaud, "the mosaics of the time of Jaroslav still exist. The traveller may admire on the 'indestructible wall' the colossal image of the Mother of God, the Last Supper, the images of saints and doctors, the angel of the Annunciation of the Virgin. The frescoes which have been preserved or carefully restored are numerous, and everywhere cover the pillars, the walls, and the vaults floored with gold." These works were executed by Greek artists, whom Jaroslav had attracted in large numbers to his capital. It was he, too, that founded schools in his dominions, that instituted the first code of laws, that encouraged literature and music, and first

struck coins in Russia. It is not strange that his grave, covered by its sarcophagus of marble, should be one of the most sacred spots within the walls of Kiev.

Venerable as the old city and its relics have always been in Russian eyes, they have not escaped desecration and mutilation, even from people of the Slav race. When the grand-princes began to break up their possessions, and divide them among their younger sons, and powerful new princedoms started up all around, especially in the north-east among the forests of the Volga, Kiev became the prize for the most ambitious and enterprising. Its ruler was acknowledged to possess the seniority among the sons of Ruric, and alone took the title of "Grand." Civil wars tore the Russian commonwealth. Confusion and anarchy reigned supreme. The princes were constantly engaged in triangular and quadrangular duels with each other; sometimes uniting to crush one who threatened to become too strong, and then again mixed up in a general *mêlée*, in which towns were sacked and whole provinces wasted with fire and sword. Kiev was the centre round which they fought. Russian historians record that in the one hundred and seventy years that intervened between Jaroslav's death and the period when the whole land succumbed to the Tartars, "sixty-four principalities had an existence more or less prolonged, two hundred and ninety-three princes disputed the throne of Kiev and other domains, and there were eighty-three civil wars."

The fame of opulent Kiev was spread far over the East, and attracted the cupidity of the restless nomads. Year after year hordes of new enemies bore down on it from the steppes. Petchenegs, Polovtsi, Khvallisses,

Uzes, Kipchaks, and Nogais followed each other in apparently endless succession, appearing without warning on the eastern horizon like clouds of arrows shot by unseen archers. Kiev was the butt at which these wild flights of Turk and Tartar horsemen were directed. The open grassy plains that led up to it were a continuation of their own deserts, and it lay directly across their path into Europe. Eighteen campaigns against the Polovtsi alone, and forty-seven invasions by that people successfully repelled, are reckoned up. These incessant attacks, if they formed the Little Russians into a war-like people, also weakened their power, and caused a continuous movement of the population into the forests of the north-east, where, if there were a sterner soil and climate, comparative tranquillity might be enjoyed.

Kiev began to decline, and Suzdal, between the Volga and the Kliasma, to rise into power. At length George Dolguruky of Suzdal entered Kiev in triumph, and it ceased from that hour to be the capital of Russia. George's son, Andrew of Suzdal, has cause to be even more bitterly remembered by Kiev. He led a host of forest-men against it, and captured it by assault, and for three days it was given up to sacrilegious plunder. The numerous monasteries and other ecclesiastical buildings, even the sacred temples founded by Vladimir and Jaroslav, were not spared, and vestments, images, relics, books, pictures, and bells were carried off to the country of the Volga.

But a more awful calamity was about to burst over Kiev and over Russia. The Tartars were at last to reap the reward of their perseverance, by means of the weakness and division of the Slavs. Unknown to all, in the

remote obscurity of Central Asia—in Mongolia, and along the chain of the Altai—Ghenghiz Khan had for forty years been labouring to weld together the Mongol tribes, until he had enrolled half a million horsemen under his banner. When the full time was come, he burst from his solitudes upon an astonished world, overwhelming kingdom after kingdom, as much by the suddenness and mystery of his appearance as by the irresistible might of his army. While in other directions he overran China, and carried his arms across Persia towards the Mediterranean, a branch of his mighty host swept round the northern end of the Caspian and came full upon Kiev. The first token of its approach was the fleeing bands of the Polovtsi, coming now, not as enemies, but as suppliants. The chivalry of Southern Russia assembled in Kiev—their northern brethren offering them no help—and went forth to meet the heathen, who were encountered on the steppes north of the Sea of Azov.

The Russian army was not merely defeated, but almost annihilated. Kiev alone had ten thousand of its citizens slain on the battle-field. But the Mongols withdrew as mysteriously as they had come. For thirteen years they were no more heard of. But at the end of that time Baty Khan was sent by his uncle, Oktai, son of the great Ghenghiz, to reduce the nations of Europe, and complete the “conquest of the world.” The whole of Russia—the north as well as the south—was this time attacked, and all fell under the Tartar, who rode over its smoking ruins to Olmutz in Moravia and Liegnitz in Silesia. For three hundred years Russia was under the domination of the Tartars—an ap-panage of the Golden Horde of Kinchaks. whose capi-

tal was first at Sarai, near Astrakhan, in the delta of the Volga.

Kiev did not escape the general desolation, as her walls and towers to this day attest. Baty appeared before its gates in the year 1240 with a vast host of invincible barbarians. "The grinding of the wooden chariots, the bellowing of the buffaloes, the harsh cries of the camels, the neighing of the horses, and the howlings of the Tartars, made it impossible," the old historians say, "to hear your own voice in the town." The walls were battered down, and the city delivered over to sack and massacre. The last defenders of Kiev retreated to the Church of the Tithe, and fell fighting round the tomb of Jaroslav. The venerable building where Christianity was first established in Russia was burned. All that remains of it are a few fragments of its mosaic pavement, preserved in the Museum of Kiev. The other churches—four hundred they are said to have numbered in those days—were rifled and desecrated; the streets ran with blood. The very tombs were broken open. The bones of saints, martyrs, and anchorites were torn by heathen hands from their crypts in the famous catacombs, and strewn abroad.

These catacombs are in the Petschersk quarter of the city—the high ground to the south of Old Kiev, and separated from it by a deep ravine, where the principal fortifications and military and government establishments are situated. The catacombs form the most singular of all the sights of Kiev, and one of the strangest memorials of ascetic devotion to be found in any country. It is they that attract specially the thousands of pilgrims that still annually crowd to the Holy

City from the remotest corner of the empire. The Monastery of the Catacombs is said to have been founded in the ninth century. The massive gateway is ornamented with figures of its first abbots, St. Anthony and St. Theodosius. In the centre is the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin, one of the most ancient and imposing of the edifices of Kiev. The belfry rises to a height of three hundred feet, and grouped round it are glittering domes and pinnacles and huge crosses. Access is got by narrow stairs to the two ranges of catacombs cut in the soft rock forming the bank of the river, a labyrinth of subterranean passages, whose heavy atmosphere, lighted only by the dim lamps placed over the sarcophagi of the dead cenobites, seems redolent of the spirit of dark asceticism of the "pious men of old" who chose this spot as their place of living sepulture.

In this gloomy underground world, where day was not distinguishable from night, and no glad sound from the upper air ever penetrated, generations of devout monks spent their days, extended sometimes to the utmost span of human life, their thoughts busied only with their prayers and penances, and in devising new methods for mortifying the frail flesh and rendering more assured their claims to future bliss. The tomb is pointed out of the hermit John, who is said to have spent the last thirty years of his life immured in the earth up to the armpits, and who ate of food only once a week. Others went to still more sad and eccentric lengths in the dismal competition of self-torture; and some allowed themselves to be bricked up alive in the little cells where they passed their doleful days. A spot more worthy of honour is the tomb of the monk Nestor, the Father of

Russian History, whose annals, written in the twelfth century, contain almost all we know authentically regarding the early fortunes of Kiev and of the Slav race. In the centre of the catacombs are two small chapels, where the anchorites met for prayer who were not self-condemned to perpetual seclusion in their cells. These little niches are placed at intervals along the passages. Within each, in an open coffin, reposes the mummified body of its former occupant, and above is a plate bearing his name.

If homage paid to their dust could make amends for a life of pain and gloom, that certainly is not wanting; for here, especially at the Festival of the Assumption, is to be witnessed the chief outpouring of that superstitious devotion which is so marked a feature of the religious life of Russia. The pilgrims, as they pass each sacred tomb, kiss reverently the shrivelled hand laid out for the purpose, and believe that they purchase thereby a blessing for themselves and their families. Another token of the holy zeal of these votaries is the battered and defaced figure of Satan, painted on the wall of the vestibule of the catacombs, on which the rage of Orthodoxy against the author of evil is expressed in characters that may be read by all. But if the annual concourse of pilgrims adds to the importance and religious prestige of Kiev, it cannot be said to conduce to the comforts of its visitors. The streets, especially the neighbourhood of the historic sites, are thronged with beggars, sturdy or whining. Rags, wretchedness, revolting sores and deformities, are exposed to view wherever the eye is turned. The pilgrims may be pious, but they are not as a rule cleanly: they may

be fit objects for charity, but they are intolerably unfortunate.

A new humiliation was reserved for Kiev when, as the Tartar domination waned to the east, the Lithuanian power grew in the west, and it fell under a new alien and pagan rule. For centuries it bent the neck to Lithuanian and Polish masters ; and not until the days of the Romanoffs, in 1667, did the "Mother of Russian Cities" again become a city of Russia. That long twilight period of foreign oppression has left no memorial worthy of the name. But in more modern times, as has been said, Kiev has been renewing its youth. It is not alone a city of historic remains, but a busy mart of trade and an enlightened seat of learning and art, full of thriving modern institutions, and containing, at least, one high triumph of science over nature—the great suspension bridge, the work of the English engineer Viniol, which spans the wide Dnieper from bank to bank.

The modern public buildings are for the most part to be found in "Podole"—the "low town"—whose handsome, well-laid-out streets, gardens, and parks occupy the space between the high ground of Petschersk and Old Kiev and the margin of the river. The University of Kiev is one of the most important in the empire, fifteen hundred students being enrolled in its classes. The library, too, is famous, though a great fire last century destroyed many of the most precious books and documents.

A popular tradition has it that one of the walled-up passages in the catacombs leads by an underground way to the ancient city of Tchernigov, the capital of the gov-

ernment of that name, situated on the Desna, eighty miles to the north-east. A more certain route, however, is available, though there is still no railway communication with Tchernigov ; and in any case a subterranean passage is not needed in order to establish a connection between it and Kiev. The two have often shared each other's good or ill fortune. Tchernigov, too, is an old town ; for Prince Oleg signed here the earliest treaty with the Greek emperors. It also had its time of dynastic trouble, when its rulers, the Olgovitches, fought the princes all round them ; and it was pillaged by Tartars and captured by Poles. But except some old ecclesiastical remains, dating as far back as the early part of the eleventh century, and fragments of the old walls, there is little in it now to detain the traveller.

Quite another interest attaches to Poltava, the chief town of the government that lies along the opposite side of the Dnieper from Kiev. Near it, in 1709, was fought that memorable battle in which Charles the Twelfth of Sweden and Czar Peter the Great brought their long duel to a climax. It was here, after nine years spent in marching from victory to victory over the face of North-Eastern Europe, and winning and losing kingdoms, and after enduring unheard-of hardships with his troops during a winter of exceptional rigour, that Charles staked his whole fortunes and reputation, the lives of his soldiers, and the safety of his native country on the issue of one desperate and decisive fight. He was far from his own Sweden, in the heart of the enemy's country ; but he had on his side the prestige of his great name, and the devotion and hitherto invincible valour of his soldiers. The

patriotic persistency of her people, with the peculiar natural features of the country that stood her in such good stead in the later struggle with Napoleon, availed Russia on this occasion to rid herself of a terrible foe. With their king, who had been wounded a day or two previous, carried in front of them in a litter, the Swedes swept on the Russian lines in the early morning in an irresistible charge. The Russian cavalry were scattered ; but under the voice of their Czar they re-formed, and checked the Swedish advance. The infantry coming up, pressed the enemy in turn ; while Prince Menchikof, piercing in between the Swedish army and Poltava, and annihilating their reserves on his way, cut Charles’s force in two. The battle became a rout. Charles himself fled for his life, leaving his artillery, baggage, and military chest, with six thousand wounded, in the hands of the Russians, and nine thousand of the finest troops that ever followed a commander dead on the field of battle. The wreck of the army—Poles, Cossacks, and Swedes—collected beyond the Dnieper, again to dissolve, and the hero of Narva disappeared into inglorious exile with the Grand Seigneur of Turkey. Sweden, the dangerous rival of Russia for centuries, was never again a formidable enemy ; and Poltava, as Peter wrote, laid firmly the foundation-stone of the new capital on the Neva.

Poltava itself, situated on a ridge overlooking the wide steppe to the eastward, is on the site of one of the border strengths built in old times by the Cossacks of the Ukraine against their Tartar foemen. Farther on we will meet with the Cossacks under conditions where the peculiarities of their military organization and duties

can be more suitably described. But it was here, on the skirts of the frontier, in innumerable brushes with Polovtsis, Nogais, and Turks, that the association of "free-riders"—which soon came to mean something equivalent to "freebooters"—first took shape, and their manner of life marked them out so much from others that they began to be looked upon as a separate race. Many are the tales handed down from mouth to mouth, or sung with guitar accompaniment by itinerant minstrels or village bards, of the deeds of the hetmans Bolgan and Mazeppa, of the sad destiny of Paleiy, or the mournful tragedies of Kossuisky and Nalivaigko. And these ballads are not all of war; love and wine mingle with the theme. At the close of a successful foray, the Zaporogian Cossacks—the free commonwealth, who guarded the country beyond the "porogs" or cataracts of the Dnieper against all comers, and carried on a continual crusade against the Mussulmans—held festivals of Brobdingnagian proportions at the island stronghold of their hetman; for days, even weeks, the carouse was kept up, and often it ended in the brethren of the lance shedding each other's blood.

Still farther eastward we pass though the ruined fragments of the old Tartar Wall, and at some distance beyond, in the basin of the Donetz, a tributary of the Don, come to Kharkov, the capital of the steppe government of that name. Kharkov points to the future rather than to the past. Its political, ecclesiastical, and academical life are all strongly philo-Slav. Specimens of each branch of that widely-spread family of nations attend the university, founded in the beginning of

the present century. Every wild theory of social and national reconstruction takes rapid root in the impulsive Slav temperament, and blossoms into wonderful new forms. Kharkov has about it a certain "go-ahead" air. It has handsome streets and buildings, and its institutions are designed on ambitious plans. It may become a great place in the new Russia that is to be, but, like the ideas of its *doctrinaires*, it is still too chaotic and unformed, too dusty and sultry in summer and grimly cold in winter, to invite a long visit at present.

To the west of Kiev are the great provinces of Volhynia and Podolia—the Western Ukraine—fertile and flourishing border countries, where the plains begin to roll in higher and higher undulations as we approach the bases of the Carpathians. Geographically, they are part of Little Russia. The principal race inhabiting them, and the soil and climate and the manner of life, are much the same; in fact, it is thought that here the Slav blood is found freest of foreign admixture. Politically, however, they form part of Western Russia. In history, since they ceased to have a separate existence, their fortunes have generally been united with those of Lithuania and Poland. Their western parts, along with their next neighbour Galicia, formed the country of the "Red Russians;" but Galicia fell to the share of Austria in the division of the spoils of Poland, and whether it also will gravitate to the great Russian Empire, or reunite in a new Sarmatia, the future will tell. Abortive Polish insurrections have taken place in these provinces, and there were risings and massacres here in the

troubulous years of 1848 and 1863. The Polish land-owners and educated classes, however, are not in full sympathy in race or religion with the Ruthenian peasantry, and the Russian and Austrian governments have taken good care not to heal the breach.

As for Volhynia and Podolia, between them they have an area nearly equal to that of England, and a population approaching four million. They are rich and pleasant countries, Podolia especially being famed for its diversified prospects and its mild climate, which have led an enthusiastic English traveller to style it the "Devonshire of Russia." These provinces raise much grain and cattle; are noted for their horses "of the Ukraine breed," herds of which were till lately, and perhaps are still, roaming the steppes in a wild state; and they do a large legitimate internal and transport trade—it may be also a little smuggling.

In the streets of Volhynian and Podolian towns like Jitomir, Vladimir, and Berditchev—the last-named of which has been dubbed the New Jerusalem, from its population of forty thousand Hebrews—the Jewish costume and features are far from unfamiliar. Banished from Great Russia, these children of Israel are extensively settled in all the southern and western governments. We will find the Lithuanian provinces farther north even more abundantly blessed with their presence than Little Russia. Wherever men do congregate to do business—and more particularly to barter—there will a certain large proportion be found with well-developed noses, long-skirted and probably greasy and looped raiment, and faces that look more cadaverous and woe-begone from their surrounding of dark ringleted locks

and peaked beards. Here, as in other parts of the world, the Hebrew people have had a history full of vicissitudes, with experiences of times both of toleration and of expulsion, of favour and of persecution. There are Jews here of many sects and degrees of sanctity—Karaites and Talmudists, Pietists and Zoharists—hating each other with an intense and concentrated fury that exceeds even their abhorrence for their Christian neighbours; and Jews gathered out of many peoples and nations—a sprinkling of the descendants of the Khazars, who are believed to have been converted to Judaism by immigrants from Palestine and Cordova, Galician Jews, Moldavian Jews, Polish Jews, and, lowest type of all, the Hebrew of Northern Hungary, who has been described as combining, in the highest possible concentration, the attributes of filth and greed. A strange, interesting, but, on the whole, not very attractive people are these children of the stock of Abraham, as we shall see when we are compelled to examine them more minutely in this northern house of bondage; and the stranger from Western Europe is certain to bear away, as one of his liveliest recollections of these countries, a picture of their cringing manners and not over clean gabardines, of the way in which talon-like hands clutched his skirts in the market-place, and hungry eyes scanned his face for prospects of barter or sale.

Many other spots of interest might be pointed out in the region of which Kiev is the centre—Kamienetz in Podolia, for instance, in other times the bulwark of Poland, and often fiercely fought for by the Turks, placed on a high peninsulated rock, round which winds the

river Smotritza on its way to the Dniester; Kremenetz in Volhynia, the highest point of Russian soil between the Black Sea and the Baltic; Pereiaslav, in Poltava, an old residence and place of strength of the early grand-princes of Kiev; and Novgorod-Sieversk, in Tchernigov, the last of the princely appanages to be devoured by the all-absorbing greed of Moscow or of Poland. For new scenery, manners, and race, however, we must follow the "course of empire," and ascend the Dnieper and Pripet to their sources in Lithuanian Russia.

CHAPTER IV.

POLAND AND LITHUANIA.



THE Dnieper—the Borysthenes of the Greeks—deserves all the fame that it has possessed in ancient and modern times. It is a magnificent stream, with a length of over a thousand miles, a breadth in its middle course varying from a quarter of a mile to a mile and a half, and in the season of the spring floods three and four miles, and a swift and deep current. It is the great geographical feature of South-Western Russia. It has made the fortune of Kiev, and has moulded in a large measure the fate of Lithuania and Poland. Apart from its celebrated “cataracts,” which are within the boundaries of South Russia, its middle course is full of difficulties and perils for the navigator. The restless, turbulent current flings itself waywardly from one side to the other of its channel, and increases with each flood the breadth of the valley it has worn through the centre of the plains. The whitish waters hold in solution large quantities of the chalk, sand, and lime which it has ground away in chafing against its banks, or in rushing over the ledges of rock that cross its bed.

The boatmen and the raftsmen of the Dnieper need

an experienced eye and a steady hand in descending its rapids to avoid being dashed against the projecting reefs, caught in the powerful eddies, or stranded on the shifting shoals. Enormous quantities of timber are brought down the stream every season for use in the treeless steppe districts to the south, or for shipment from Kherson and Odessa. Other raw produce—hides and tallow, wax and honey, hemp and grain—with the manufactures of Western Russia, such as leather and linen goods, spirits and turpentine, are transported by water, which, as in every other part of the Russian Empire, affords the chief means of conveyance. These materials do not come from the upper regions of the Dnieper alone. Through the Desna it has canal communication with the country of the Oka and the Volga, and in other directions it is united with the Baltic rivers, the Dwina, the Niemen, and the Vistula. The difficulty in its lower course is the impetuous current that has to be contended against; but from its upper waters you can penetrate to the innermost recesses of the empire, or to any of the seas that border Russia.

A little way above Kiev the nature of the river changes. There it is no longer one great main stream, reinforced only by shallow rivulets from the thirsty steppes, but large tributaries extend like the fingers of a hand, or like the branches of a tree from the trunk. The name of the Dnieper is given to the central channel, which leads us on to Moghilev and Smolensk; but the Pripet and the Desna, its western and its eastern branches, have almost equal claim to the title, from the length of their courses and their volume. Other changes are manifest. The banks become lower and

less diversified by cliff and shelf. The woods become more frequent and dense. The gloomy drapery of the coniferous trees is again a feature in the landscape. Morasses spread for miles and miles back from the banks of the streams, and in periods of inundation are converted into vast shallow lakes. The climate has grown more rigorous and more moist. The frost bites deeper and the snow lies thicker in winter, and there are no such blossoming expanses of orchard lands to be seen in the summer as in the kindly Ukraine. We have unquestionably returned to the swamps and the forests of the north. This time, in changing the climate and the soil, we come also among a new race, with a history and traditions separate in many respects from those of the people whom we have hitherto been visiting.

The part of the Czar's dominions on which we are now entering is that which generally comes first under the notice of the traveller in Russia. His approach is made, as a rule, not through Novgorod, or by way of the Black Sea and the Dnieper, but by one of the great lines of railway in connection with the main routes across the continent of Europe which enter Russia from the west, and are prolonged to St. Petersburg or Moscow. Before reaching the Russian people, he must pass through a country which, while it is within the political boundaries of the empire, is intensely anti-Russian in its sympathies,—through the Kingdom of Poland. In the eyes of patriotic Poles, however, Poland begins before the frontier of the "Kingdom" is touched, and it extends far beyond the limits that have been laid down as marking the border of the Russian provinces.

The Kingdom of Poland, since the last insurrection, has

itself become little more than a "geographical expression;" it is under direct control of the Government at St. Petersburg, and retains few of the privileges that were accorded to it when it was formed into a separate sovereignty and handed over by the Great Powers to the Czar by the Treaty of Vienna. Poland, in the official sense, consists of ten small provinces, with an area about equal to that of England, and a population of rather more than six millions. But the Poland that the Poles recognize is the extensive country which existed previous to the partitions—a region much more extensive than France, and now estimated to contain nearly thirty million people. Before that series of acts of international brigandage, by which it was broken up and appropriated piecemeal by its neighbours, Poland included, in addition to the "Kingdom," the province of Posen and part of West Prussia, now in possession of the Emperor of Germany; Cracow and Galicia, which have fallen to the lot of Austria; and a broad and long stretch of territory, embracing the ancient Lithuanian provinces Volhynia, Podolia, and part of Kiev, which have long ago come to be regarded by foreigners as an integral part of the dominions of the Czar. Danzig in 1772, the date of the first partition, was a sea-port of Poland on the Baltic; Kamienetz was its border stronghold towards Turkey; and its frontier extended to the north and east almost to the walls of Riga, Smolensk, and Kiev.

At a still earlier period, the Polish possessions were yet more extensive. At different times they embraced Bessarabia, Moldavia, Moravia, Silesia, and Livonia. The Ukraine, as has been mentioned, was for centuries part of Poland whose rule was established over the

whole of the region where the early Norman-Russ princes had borne sway, and approached within one hundred miles of Moscow itself. In the great square of Warsaw, where the citizens were "massacred" by the Russian garrison during the excited times of the last insurrection, there is a monument erected to the memory of King Sigismund III. by his son and successor Ladislas, which records how Moscow was conquered in 1611 by the said Sigismund; a fact which reminds us, as Mr. Sutherland Edwards remarks in his "Polish Captivity," that the metropolitan Philarete, father of the first of the Romanoff line of Czars, was carried off a prisoner to Poland, and confined there for nine years, for refusing to crown this same Ladislas as sovereign of Muscovy. The monument also tells that the conquering Sigismund had "recaptured" Smolensk from the Russians; but it had not been standing ten years when the "key of Moscow" had been "recaptured" again by the Russians, and this time kept.

Before the time of Sigismund and Ladislas, who were Swedish princes, the power of Poland had begun to disintegrate. The old dynasty of Jagellon, in which the crown was hereditary, had ended, and the turbulent and greedy landowning class were rapidly absorbing to themselves all real authority in the state. The capital had been removed from Cracow, the "cradle and last resting-place of Polish independence," to Warsaw, where the court and the great nobles spent their time in dissipation and intrigue, and occasionally in bloody quarrels. The wars against Russia and her other neighbours brought Poland no good, in spite of the unfailing dash and bravery of her mounted

soldiery and the skill of her military commanders. Yet, less than one hundred years before the first partition of Poland, by the Empresses Catherine and Maria Theresa and Frederick the Great of Prussia, a Polish army, under John Sobieski, saved Europe when the Turks laid siege to Vienna.

Sobieski, however, great warrior and statesman though he was, made a terrible breach in the defences of his country when he bartered Kiev to the Russians. On his death, anarchy crept more rapidly into the constitution of Poland. The "noble" class, to which belonged all holding land, grasped after new powers and privileges on the elevation of every new monarch, and the ruler became a mere puppet in the hands of a factious oligarchy. The great bulk of the people, meanwhile, had no share in Polish rights or liberties, but were in a miserably poor, degraded, and enslaved condition. The choice of a King of Poland became the great public scandal and danger of Europe. The supporters of rival candidates assembled in Warsaw resembled more in attitude and number hostile armies, than electors met to perform a patriotic duty. Each powerful magnate of the land—the heads of the houses of Czartoryski, Zamoyski, Radziwill, Potocki, Sapeha, Wielopolski, and the rest—could bring thousands of votes and of spears in support of the side he favoured. At the same time, the absurd law of the *Liberum Veto*, by which each member of the Diet had the right to annul the whole proceedings by his individual vote, opened a wide door for corruption and cabal, and made it almost impossible to come to a decision. Poland, in fact, was "vetoed" to death. Her own children busied

themselves in hastening her disintegration. Every neighbour had a finger or a hand in the series of broils and plots which the Poles called their national affairs. Repeatedly the squabbles of the Diet ended in a civil war, which spread into a general European war.

The last King of Poland, Stanislas Augustus Poniatowski, was a mere nominee of Russia. Russian troops garrisoned the country, and Russian hands guided the administration. It must be confessed that little sorrow was expressed, even in freedom-loving England, when the three Partitioning Powers proceeded to "concentrate" Poland, by each cutting away a large slice of territory, Russia, of course, appropriating the lion's share. The Poles were at length roused to a sense of the absolute necessity of a united national feeling, if their country was to be saved from utter ruin. The Diet, in 1791, decreed a new and liberal constitution, by which, among other things, the emancipation of the serfs was provided for. This gave the signal for the second partition, a private burglarious arrangement between Russia and Prussia; and then followed the heroic struggle led by Kosciusko to cast out the invaders, ending in the entry of Suvaroff into Warsaw, over the blood-stained ashes of Prague, and the complete dismemberment of 1795.

Hope rose high again in Polish bosoms when Buonaparte began to humble their enemies, the Partitioning Powers. No soldiers fought more bravely, or clung more devotedly to the cause of the great Emperor, than his Polish legions. They shared in his ruin; and since the "grand-duchy of Warsaw" was handed over to the personal rule of the Czars, under the name of the Kingdom of Poland, as a separate monarchy, limited by con-

stitutional rights, only evil fortune has befallen the cause of the Poles. The desperate rising of 1830-31 was punished by the slaughter that attended Paskievitch's capture of Warsaw; by executions, confiscations, wholesale conscription, and the transportation of thousands of families to Siberia; by the cancelling of constitutional liberties and privileges, and the proscribing of peculiar Polish costumes and customs, and by the suppression of the Warsaw University and the removal of its library to St. Petersburg. The savage guerilla struggle of 1848 resulted in the taking away of almost the last vestiges of Poland's rights.

Rash should he be, however, who would assume that we have heard the last of the Polish question. The nation lies bound and crushed under the weight of its powerful enemies, but the national spirit is not dead. On the contrary, the Polish people under adversity have developed qualities that were not visible in their days of prosperity. A common hate and a common grief have had power, for a time at least, to weld all classes and factions into patriots, though it has generally happened that with the first smile of good fortune on the national cause old dissensions have broken out. Never were the bravery of Polish soldiers and the devotion of Polish women more splendidly shown than in those ruinous struggles to regain independence. The period of Poland's degradation has likewise been her most brilliant literary era. Well may the conspirators who have compassed her fall wonder whether it is a ghost or a living nation that rises persistently from the grave in which they thought their victim securely laid. It would be hard to pro-

phesy what may be the future fate of a race that has shown so indestructible a love of independence, and such elasticity of spirit under misfortune.

Meanwhile, for Russia's sins and her own, Poland is an integral part of the Russian Empire, and the patriotic instincts of Warsaw are held sternly in check by a large Russian garrison. In the castle, to which Sigismund III. transferred the royal residence from Cracow, Russian authority has established its head-quarters. From the citadel, built by Czar Nicolas, the length and breadth of the Polish capital can be surveyed, and the Russian guns could batter the city to ruins were the townsmen again to rise against the Muscovite. It is the hand of Russia on the throat of Poland; and not for an instant can the ruling power afford to slacken the grasp.

The left bank of the Vistula, on which Warsaw is chiefly built, is high, and the city, with its stately lines of streets, wide squares, and spacious gardens, is picturesquely disposed along the brow of the cliff and on the plain above. Across the broad sandy bed of the stream, here "shallow, ever changing, and divided as Poland itself," is the suburb of Praga or Prague, which has never recovered from Suvaroff's savage handling in 1795, and where lines of houses are thinly scattered amid wide spaces of waste ground. The Vistula, which is to Warsaw and Poland what the Dnieper is to Kiev and Little Russia, is crossed by the railway and old wooden bridges; and lying against the banks are lines of timber boats and rafts laden with grain, which the hardy raftsmen navigate, by means of long poles, from the sources of the river in the Carpathians to its mouth at Danzig, arriving at their destination "lean, long, and brown," having

often, it is said, eaten almost nothing on their river voyage. The castle also commands a view of the Sigismund Place, where, on the 8th April 1831, the conqueror of Moscow and Smolensk looked on from his marble pedestal while Russian steel and lead cleared the square of Warsovian citizens. The Czar Nicolas's jealous fears caused the removal of Thorwaldsen's group in bronze commemorating the brilliant career of Poniatowski; but the statues of Copernicus and John Sobieski still keep alive memories of which Poland is proud. Other public monuments in Warsaw, such as that in the Saxon Square in honour of the Polish generals who remained faithful to the Czar at the time of the great insurrection of half a century ago, are, it is needless to say, the work of Poland's masters, and on these patriots look as the visible tokens of national degradation.

Many are the palaces, patrician mansions, churches, and public buildings of Warsaw; but on the whole there is little that is distinctly Polish, such, for instance, as one finds at the old capital, Cracow, now part of Austrian territory. Still less is there to remind one of Russia, except in the badly-paved condition of the streets, and the way in which magnificence and squalor are jumbled together. The architecture is showy, often meretricious; but the taste displayed is Western, and founded mainly on French canons. The Zamek, the palace of the old sovereigns, contains many art treasures, and is redolent in the associations of the time when Poland was a powerful state. Connected with it is the great hall where the members of the Diet sat, and squabbled and "vetoed" away their country's liberty. Other palaces are reserved for the transaction of the

business of the government; and few cities are so highly favoured with public parks, drives, promenades, and gardens. Most notable of these latter are those of the Belvidere Palace, whence the Grand Duke Constantine fled when all Poland rose against his harsh rule, and where Prince Gortchakoff died while the country was in the throes of a new rebellion.

Many of the country residences around Warsaw, especially at Ujazdov, and at other spots along the course of the Vistula, vie in internal magnificence, and in the rich park and forest scenery that surrounds them, with the environs of the proudest capitals in Europe; and the high culture, fascinating grace of manner, and warm-hearted hospitality of the old Polish families who inhabit these stately piles, are proverbial.

Warsaw itself, in spite of all its misfortunes and humiliations, ranks as the third city, in point of population, in the empire. It has excellent hotels, a brilliant society, and numerous devices for killing the time pleasantly. It is his own fault if the visitor finds his stay here profitless and wearisome. Away from Warsaw, however, and the country houses of the proprietor class, Poland has few attractions to show. The accommodation for travellers at the small country inns, generally kept by Jews, is execrable. The condition of the roads is so notoriously bad that there is a German proverb that runs, that there are "five elements" in Poland—earth, air, fire, water, and *slush*. The scenery has so much of flatness and sameness, that one sympathizes a little with the French soldier who exclaimed, on seeing that Poland of which he had heard the "exiles" raving so ecstatically, "And these beggars call this a country!"

The ground is not so heavily timbered as is the case farther to the east and north, and the population is more dense. But large spaces are covered with forest, and the cultivated land often consists of clearings made in the heart of the woods, generally near a little lake or a stream. Then there are wide stretches of sand and heath, where the country seems an interminable dead level, though the whole land has a gentle slope towards the north. Interspersed among these barren or wooded tracts are areas containing some of the finest corn-bearing soil in Europe, whence, since time immemorial, vast quantities of grain have been sent for shipment to the ports on the Baltic.

Polish agriculture, however, can hardly be described as in a thriving condition, judged, at least, by the appearance of the peasantry. Picturesque enough they look in their holiday costume, of which a long, braided military tunic, with sash, high boots, and jaunty hat with feather or tassel, frequently form part; and their bearing has a dignity and grace which their German neighbours can never hope to acquire. Their everyday dress, however, is often ragged and meagre enough, and, like their miserable dwellings, speaks only too truly of poverty and wretchedness. Still more sad is the tale told by their cringing manners before superiors, when they grovel on the ground and kiss the hem of their lords' garments. The Polish peasant is charged with being lazy and thriftless. He is said to be much too fond of the potato brandy which is extensively made in the country. He is as fond of flocking on pilgrimages to holy shrines as his brother of Russia—with the difference that his petitions are addressed to the saints of

the Roman Catholic calendar, instead of the canonized of the Orthodox Church; and there are many other points of resemblance between the two peoples in character and habits. But the political union that has for a hundred years existed has done anything but foster good feeling between these two allied races. While we linger in Poland, we are on soil that is more than ever it was alien to Russia.

At Warsaw is the parting of two main routes—one running north-eastward to St. Petersburg; the other more to the southward, for the old capital of Ivan the Terrible on the Moskva. Or we may choose another road, which will carry us south-eastward to the venerable precincts of Kiev, which we have lately left. By whichever route we proceed, the frontiers of Lithuania—a name that once represented a great fact, but is now hardly even a “geographical term”—are reached at a distance of some one hundred versts from Warsaw. And then new changes come to view. We are plainly a stage nearer Asia. Poland was a civilized power, with a brilliant and cultured court, when Lithuania, its dependency, was a semi-barbarous state, with a population barely reclaimed from paganism, and when Muscovy was still crouching abjectly at the feet of the Tartars. A certain brightness and lightness which seem to form part of the Polish landscape, in spite of its monotonous lines, gradually fade from the scene. Something more harsh, neglected, and savage takes their place. A corresponding eclipse is observable in the faces of the people. The fiery vivacity of the “French of the East” slowly obscures into Lithuanic stolidity. It is a race, one can see, in whose history misfortunes have been

largely mingled up; who have so long had to bend their necks under a heavy yoke of servitude, that they can scarcely straighten themselves up and believe that they are men.

By the route that leads to St. Petersburg and to the pushing, ambitious Russia of to-day, we cross parts of the governments of Vilna, Kovno, and Vitebsk; by that which proceeds to Moscow and the soul of the old conservative Russia that is passing away, Grodno, Minsk, and Moghilev are traversed. These six governments compose what is generally known as Western Russia, though Volhynia and Podolia are for departmental purposes included. Their area extends to one hundred and eighteen thousand square miles—larger than the kingdom of Italy—and they have a population of six and a quarter millions of souls. The first three are on the northern side of the water-shed, and are drained by the Niemen and Dwina; the three latter are, for the most part, on the upper streams of the Dnieper and its tributary the Pripet. All were comprehended within the ancient limits of Lithuania, which in the time of its greatest extension also included, in addition to Poland, Little Russia and large parts of Great Russia, of the Baltic Provinces, and of Austria. The eastern districts, chiefly peopled by Slavs, are known as "White Russia;" and the western, Grodno, Minsk, and Vilna, where Lithuanians most abound, as "Black Russia." Mingle these two peasant races together, in greater or less proportion, with an overflow of Poles on that frontier, sprinkle thickly throughout with Jews, and place on the top a Polish or Polanized landlord class—generally non-resident, and seldom in sympathy either in religion or race with their dependants—place them in a

flat and uninteresting country, where fertile lands are mixed up with vast tracts of swamp and forest, unreclaimed heath and sandy barren, and you will have an idea of the population and condition of Lithuania of to-day.

It is a border land of races and creeds which has unfortunately no natural border. During one short period of its political history, when its two neighbours, Poland and Russia, were weakened, it suddenly grew into the leading power in Eastern Europe, and threatened to absorb them. But it ended in being crushed between them, and was then leisurely swallowed by Russia. It was the last great stronghold of pagan worship in Europe, and here Western Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy had a long, noisy, and bloody settlement with each other, before heathenism was extirpated, and the landmarks of the two Christian religions laid down. In the end Russian influence triumphed in the religious as in the political struggle; and the Greek Uniate body, which represented the temporary compromise between the two Churches, has lately been dragged in a very summary way into the Orthodox fold. Protestantism, however, has here gained a footing which it possesses in few other parts of the Russian Empire, and its adherents are chiefly to be found in "Black Russia."

Poles and Muscovites, Turks and Tartars, Germans, Swedes, and French have marched across this land, and chosen it as a field on which to settle their quarrels; and whichever side won, the unfortunate inhabitants were certain to be losers. Glimpses will be got of the chief episodes in these intricate and prolonged struggles as we pass along, but there is first something to be said

of the general aspect of the country and mode of life of the various peoples that occupy Western Russia.

There have been improvements of late years, and especially since the abolition of serfage; but the main impression still gathered from a run across Lithuania is that of a land where man has, as yet, made but feeble efforts to tame the savageness of nature, and where even the works of his own hands show signs of dilapidation and decay. In the south of the country there is perhaps more marshy land than forest, and in the north more forest than morass; towards the eastern side the little townships scattered over the waste of heath and wood seem to be sprinkled rather more thickly, and some improvement in the direction of tidiness and cleanliness may be detected in the dress and habitations of the people.

But such changes as these are proceed gradually, and do not alter the sense of oppressive dulness. The improvements only show how much has still to be done before a decent standard of prosperity and comfort is attained. The traveller draws back his head from the carriage window long before the lights have faded from the bare downs or the sombre shadows have darkened under the pine-woods. He gets tired of catching peeps of squalid groups in the dirty, crooked streets of the little towns; of long-coated peasants trudging homeward by the side of their waggons; of fantastic little village spires breaking the horizon; of a stream winding its slow way seaward, or a canal with a barge laden with rye or timber, bound on a similar journey; of rickety, unpicturesque bridges and roads in all stages of disrepair; in short, of a general air of

blight and impoverishment; and he wraps himself up as comfortably as possible in his corner, and fervently wishes that Lithuania were well behind him and Moscow at hand.

Several causes might be assigned for this mildewed look, which perhaps, after all, is only made specially visible here from the close neighbourhood of this region to the active, bustling life of Western Europe. There has never, for one thing, been much sympathy between the tillers of the soil and their lords and masters. Between the *pans* and the serfs there has always been a great gulf fixed; and nowhere has the yoke of servitude pressed with more unmitigated weight upon the neck of the *moujik* than in Lithuania. Elsewhere in Russia there were close bands of religion and race uniting the two classes. Here the landowners for centuries professed a creed that the body of their people execrated as heresy; if they were not actually of alien race, they were in language, feeling, and civilization Polish. The boyards in the Volga and Oka countries differed from their bondsmen mainly in social rank. Till a comparatively recent date there was little in their education, their tastes, or even the surroundings of their life to distinguish them from the peasantry around them. Mr. Mackenzie Wallace, in his lively sketch of the "small laird," such as still exists in the more out-of-the-way corners of Russia, exhibits him as but little exalted in his views of life or refinement of manners above his humblest neighbours—that he is a Russian of the Russians, bigoted in his orthodoxy, superstitious, intensely conservative of old prejudices and customs; with many traits of medieval rudeness and coarseness lingering about his

person and his mansion, and with his vision bounded by the narrow interests of his family and his district.

But the Lithuanian nobles since the days of the Jagellons, and to a great extent still, have been the representatives of another culture. Their lives were mostly spent amid the diversions of Warsaw, or Cracow, or Vilna, where a close imitation was attempted of the brilliancy and gaiety of the French court, where art and literature were cultivated, and where life sped on in a round of pleasure and intrigue, of which their unlucky serfs could have as little conception as participation. They held themselves not only as immeasurably superior in social station, but scarcely even of the same flesh and blood. There was little in the scenery or society of their vast domains to tempt them down to them. Each magnate had his dreary residence scores of miles distant from that of his next neighbour of rank. Sport in the forests, or the collection of the rents and dues gathered with unsparing hand by his Hebrew stewards, was often the only errand that brought the noble down to his lands. They were not much loved by their people, these Polanized noblemen, and they scarcely deserved to be. The state of rich and poor was very much what an American writer has somewhat unjustly described as that of existing Russian society—a company of “wolves and swine.” There were risings of the peasantry in districts where their tyrants were more than ordinarily cruel and rapacious, but they were generally of an isolated and local character. There were race and religious divisions among the people themselves, and their spirits were cowed by long familiarity with oppression. The irksome and

heavy burden of Polish supremacy, however, had an important effect in disposing the inhabitants to accept with resignation the transfer of their country to the rule of the Czar of Muscovy as the close of the long struggle between that state and Poland.

But besides his Sarmatian master, another figure has sat on the shoulders of the heavy-laden peasant of Lithuania and White Russia, and clung to his neck with the tenacity of an Old Man of the Sea. This is the Jew. We found him a familiar feature of the towns of Volhynia and Podolia; and here he is in even greater force. The scent grows steadily stronger as we approach the frontiers of Poland proper. The race has been proverbially a down-trodden, persecuted, and abused one for some two thousand years. Here for some centuries the Jews had enjoyed comparative favour, or at least immunity from oppression. One wishes to trace some pleasant fruits of their prosperity in their condition and influence. But it must be admitted that even the most impartial and most well-disposed of travellers have been able to furnish only meagre materials for so attractive a picture.

The Jew is not loved by the Gentiles among whom he dwells without mingling; and in some respects he is even more offensive to the moral and physical senses of outsiders. He is keen-witted, frugal, patient, long-suffering, persevering, capable of intense application and mental study; an unrivalled hand at a bargain; learned often, after his way, in the law and its "interpretation," and in many cases scrupulously guiding his conduct by these lights. To his own people he is generally charitable and even open-handed. He is

tenaciously attached to his faith, deeply reverent towards his spiritual superiors, and cherishes a touching affection for the distant land of his fathers, in which, if possible, he contrives to have his bones laid. But his charity seldom goes beyond the bounds of his race, or rather of his sect.

The physique of the typical Israelite bears an unmistakable impress of his mode of life. He is meagre and undersized of frame, with a weak chest, stooping shoulders, and eager, shambling gait. He lives in stuffy, unwholesome dens, cooped up with unknown swarms of his relations and dependants in filthy, undrained lanes and streets. The occupation of his tribe for centuries has allowed no free play for the muscles or exercise of the lungs. Unwholesome air, innutritious and insufficient food, late vigils, and an unslaked thirst for gain, have pinched and paled his features. Their dress consists of a linen shirt and drawers, covered by a long black robe dangling loosely about their legs, and fastened in front by silver clasps, and on the head they wear a fur cap or round broad-brimmed hat. The Jew rarely learns a handicraft; he is hardly ever known to devote himself to agriculture. Attempts have been made to found Jewish agricultural colonies in remote parts of the Russian dominions, but they have been miserable failures. The race are true dwellers in the towns, and have neither calling nor pleasure in the country. Some occupations are almost set apart for them—such as those of butchers and innkeepers; but they are mostly such as exercise the wits rather than the hands. They are the stewards, the factors, and the factotums of the nobility; the store and provision dealers, the post-hirers,

the ferry contractors, the distillers, the money-changers, and, of course, the money-lenders of the community. Ukases have been issued to prevent the wholesale importation by them of the old clothes of Western Europe. They have a finger or a whole hand in every trade and in most men's business.

When they first began to gain footing in this quarter has not been accurately traced. They came from all points of the compass, but chiefly, perhaps, from Germany, during the times of persecution. The rulers of Lithuania and Poland needed money for war and pleasure, and were not scrupulous as to the sources from which they obtained aid. The Jews, while opening their purse-strings, were able to make conditions on behalf of their co-religionists. New privileges were granted to them in the time of Casimir the Great of Poland, whose favourite, a beautiful Jewess named Esther, exerted herself, like her namesake of old, to obtain favour for the chosen people; and Poland and Lithuania became the "Jew's Paradise." The race, it is said, is increasing rapidly, in spite of its weakness physically, through the early marriages which are contracted—the youths often marrying when they are fifteen or sixteen years of age, and girls still earlier. The total Jewish population of the Russian Empire is now estimated at not far short of three million, and is chiefly collected in these western governments. They toil not, neither do they spin; they add little directly to the producing power of the country; but they exercise a great and secret influence in society and in the state, and—if you take the word of a certain school of Russian politicians—an influence at least as much for evil as for good.

All this, of course, does not excuse the brutal and cowardly persecution to which the Jews have recently been exposed in these eastern countries. The anti-Jewish riots which broke out at Kiev, Odessa, Elisabetgrad, and other towns in the south-west, afterwards spreading to the Polish provinces, must to all right-thinking minds appear as a disgrace to modern civilization. Men, women, and children were murdered; the houses in the Jewish quarters plundered and burned, and the inmates turned homeless into the streets; and the worst scenes of the mob ferocity and intolerance of the middle ages re-enacted at the end of the nineteenth century. There are not wanting ugly proofs that these atrocities were deliberately planned, and that the anti-Jewish feeling had no higher root than vulgar envy and greed. A heavy share of the discredit of these scenes falls on the Russian authorities, who, if they did not actually encourage, took little pains to prevent, to suppress, or to punish these displays of Christian resentment.

The peasantry of Western Russia are mostly of that shade of the dominant race of the empire known as "White Russians." Outward appearances and popular opinion do not assign them a high place among the Slav peoples. They are, as a rule, smaller of stature, ruder, and more ignorant than the average Russians. The national faults are slightly exaggerated and the national virtues slightly obscured among them. They bear signs of generations of oppression by foreign masters in their character, as well as in their physique and their industrial and social state. Superlative cleanliness, truthfulness, and temperance have never been among the strong points of the Russian; and the White Russian

assuredly is not a shining example of any of these virtues.

But there is much to excuse him. It is not fair to try him by our standards. In judging of his honesty of word and deed, it must be remembered how short a time it is since he escaped from thralldom, how much he is brought into association with low standards of commercial morals, and that there are already signs of improvement. It may be that his indulgence in strong drink is only regulated by his opportunities; and it is true that the quantities of spirits manufactured, after making allowance for what is exported, seem to provide the population with more liquor than is good for them. But we ought to bear in mind how monotonous is the daily routine of his life, how cheerless and comfortless his surroundings, and how few are his opportunities of partaking of more healthy and intellectual amusements, were his taste so far educated as to enjoy them.

Side by side with the White Russian is an individual to whom the fates have, if possible, been still more unkind. This is the Lithuanian, whose characteristic figure and language are gradually, it is to be feared, becoming more rare in Lithuania. At present the race count, it is believed, some one million of souls in the division of Western Russia, including in this number the Lett branch of the family. Over half a million more—for the most part Letts—are found in Livonia and other parts of the Baltic provinces. The district of Augustowo, in the Kingdom of Poland, and Gumbinnen, in East Prussia, are also Lithuanian; indeed, the aboriginal inhabitants of the Prussian provinces bordering on the Baltic were of this

stock, and their language has only in recent times become extinct. The Lithuanians are, as a rule, tall men, of rather clumsy build, blue-eyed, and fair and even flaxen haired, with prominent and well-formed features, and a stolid expression. The women among them possess not seldom the gift of beauty, of a robust and blooming type.

Like their Slav cousins, they are tillers of the soil; their characters and habits have been moulded in the same hard school of toil and endurance. Less quick and impulsive in temperament than the Russians, they are credited with being even more inert and lazy at work. In their capacity for hard drinking, they will not yield the palm to any Slav. Many are Protestant; some belong to the Catholic faith; the bulk of them are Orthodox. But if you could take one of these big, slow-moving, slow-thinking Lithuanian peasants, and analyze his religious beliefs and ideas, you would probably be surprised to find how large is the alloy of ancient heathenism mixed up with his Christianity. It is not perhaps that he is more ignorant and superstitious than his Russ neighbour. Both have in a nearly equal degree a belief in signs and marvels, in dreams and omens, in magic and witchcraft, in sheeted spectre and grim were-wolf. Both are apt to make a "fetish" of the observances of their faith, which are often relics of traditional pagan practices. But to the Lithuanian the old gods are more near and more real than to almost any other European people. Perkun, the thunder god, the equivalent of Perun of the Slavs, still exacts a secret homage; the sacred groves of their ancestors, if they are no longer objects of worship, are feared and shunned as spots where demoniacal influences are potent; their popular sagas, tales, and

riddles not only relate the great exploits of their national heroes, but the wonderful deeds of the gods and goddesses of their mythology, who are no less real to them than the historical personages.

The Lithuanians were pagans for three or four centuries after the peoples about them had been converted to Christianity by apostles from the Greek or the Latin Church; and the most glorious period of their history was that in which they started suddenly into power, in resistance to the proselytizing efforts of the soldiers of the Cross. Little is known of them till the eleventh century, when we find them a rude and poor people, paying tribute of birch bark and brooms, the only produce their woods and marshes afforded, to the Russian princes of Polotsk, Smolensk, or Galitch. That they were the Ostrogoths that followed Odoacer into Italy, and brought back to their own wild lands some of those soft musical tones that distinguish their tongue from that of their kin, it would be rash to say. But it seems certain that they belong to the Slavonic branch of the great Aryan family tree, but several degrees farther removed from the Russians than even the Poles and Bohemians; and it is said that their language has a closer resemblance to the Sanscrit mother-tongue than any other in Europe.

Lett, Lithuanian, Pruss, and Yatshwing, they dwelt in the depths of their forests, under the rule of their high priest or *kriwe*, who had below him lower orders of priests and female votaries, worshipping the sacred fire that burned constantly in front of Perkun and the enchanted serpents; or scouring forth on raids, mounted on their hardy ponies of the breed for which

this country is still famous, armed with clubs and staves, and blowing barbaric blasts on their long trumpets.

Then in the Crusading times Adalbert, the Bishop of Riga, in Livonia, organized his Order of the Sword-Bearers, who set to work with fire and sword to Christianize these heathen people; and by-and-by the Sword-Bearers were joined in the holy work by the famous Teutonic Knights. Provinces on the Baltic were conquered; towns and villages captured and burned far in the interior; and the people slain or enslaved. They speak of three hundred thousand having been slaughtered or sold in this crusade. But the Lithuanians were stubborn in their attachment to their ancient divinities. Time after time, after having been dragged within the pale of the Church, they jumped into their rivers to wash off the stains of baptism so soon as the oppressors' backs were turned. The long spears of the German knights began to penetrate the inmost recesses of their sacred groves. Despair pricked them to action; and they had learned something of the new weapons and modes of warfare from their enemies.

A certain Mindvog arose early in the thirteenth century, and gathered the broken tribes into a kingdom of Lithuania, and waged a not unequal strife both with Germans and Russians. But it was a century later ere the great Lithuanic hero Gedimin came forward to avenge his race on their foes, by carrying the war into their own territory. He conquered the Russian provinces to the east and south, incorporated Volhynia and Little Russia in his territory, and entered Kiev in triumph. His capital—the new capital of Russia it may be called, for the Tartar now held all the *Volga* countries—he fixed

at Vilna, the centre of old Lithuania; and here and at his other residence of Novogrodk he allowed Greek churches to be built. A tolerant as well as an able man was Gedimin; and though he remained a pagan, he encouraged both Roman and Orthodox Christianity, and invited workmen and artists from the west to beautify his capital and teach his people trades. When he died, his body, after the manner of his ancestors, was "burned in a caldron, with his war-horse and favourite groom." The descendants of Gedimin share with those of Ruric the right to the title of *knyaz*, or "prince," in Russia.

A still more redoubtable warrior was his son Olgerd, who reduced the proud republics of Novgorod and Pskov to submission, made the Crimea his vassal, cleared the lower Dnieper countries of the Tartars, and marched three times in triumph to the gates of Moscow. His son was Jagellon, who, marrying in 1386 Hedwig, the heiress of Poland, united that country to Lithuania, and was the founder of a dynasty. It was he that effected the Christianization of his people, in the same summary fashion that Vladimir some four hundred years earlier had converted the Slavs of Kiev. "They were divided," says M. Rambaud in his "History of Russia," "into groups, and the priest then sprinkled them with holy water, pronouncing, as he did so, a name of the Latin calendar. To one group he gave the name of Peter, to another that of Paul or John. He overthrew the idol Perkun, extinguished the sacred fire that burned in the castle of Vilna, killed the holy serpents, and cut down the magic woods."

But from Jagellon's days the Lithuanians count the decadence of their greatness; henceforth they were more or less an appanage of Poland. One more great hero

they had—Witout, the grandson of Gedimin, who headed the national cause, and compelled Jagellon to yield him the government of the grand-duchy. Witout captured Smolensk, and conceived the grand scheme of driving out the Mongols, and uniting the whole of Russia under his sceptre. But his great army, composed of Poles, Lithuanians, Germans, and Russians, was utterly defeated by the Khan of the Golden Horde on the Vorskla, near Poltava, almost on the site of Charles the Twelfth's disaster; and the ambitious Witout turned his attention to the west. At Tannenberg, in 1410, he completely broke the power of the Teutonic Order, which so long had been a thorn in the side of Russia. He intrigued and negotiated with Pope and Emperor, and had strong hopes of being anointed and recognized as a Catholic king. Grand fêtes were given by him at Vilna, where, we are told, he was attended by grand-duke and hospodar, by the King of Poland and the Khan of the Crimea, the Metropolitan of Moscow, the Master of the Teutonic Knights, and the ambassadors of the Emperors of the East; and where each day "seven hundred oxen, fourteen hundred sheep, and game in proportion" were consumed. In the midst of this revelry, the word came to the old man of eighty that the crown for which he had angled and fought was not to be his, and he died of the disappointment. With him the separate history of Lithuania came to an end; it gradually merged in Poland, the Treaty of Lublin completing the union in 1569.

Vilna, which has been the centre of most of the great events in Lithuanian history, is still a place of considerable size, situated at the junction of the Vilia and the Vileyka rivers, tributaries of the Niemen. By that

nessed a few months later, when the city gates opened to receive the miserable remnants of that once magnificent warrior host, thus far on their way back to France. Reduced to forty thousand men, they had crossed the Beresina, a tributary of the Dnieper, in the province of Minsk, in front of an enemy one hundred and fifty thousand strong, that dared not attack the desperate men. Hardly had they reached the shelter of the walls of Vilna, where they hoped for a short reprieve from exposure, fatigue, and fighting, when the guns of the Russians were heard, and they had to continue their flight, abandoning the thousands of sick and wounded, who, it is said, were flung out of the windows and trampled to death in the streets, while the Cossacks fell upon and massacred the camp-followers. Thirty thousand bodies, according to Rambaud, were burned on piles.

There is little to attract us to Kovno, which has just been mentioned. It is a place of some eight thousand inhabitants, dating back to the twelfth century, contains the usual large proportion of Jews, is the capital of a government, and does a considerable trade by the Niemen, on which it is situated. Grodno, higher up the Niemen, and adjoining Vilna on the southern side, is a government to which more interest attaches. The town of Grodno is almost as celebrated in Lithuanian annals as Vilna itself. It was one of the earliest of the cities in the grand-duchy, dating back to the twelfth century. Even at that early period it had become an appanage of the family of Ruric; and a church arose in this heathen quarter dedicated to St. Boris and St. Gleb, the two murdered sons of the apostolic Vladimir. who are so

inseparably associated together in the secular and ecclesiastical legends of Russia. A convent—that of St. Basil—was founded about the same time, and still exists.

The great King Stephen Batory of Poland took much interest in the welfare of the Orthodox of Grodno, and interfered to prevent the destruction with which they were threatened by the Jesuits. There were other Polish monarchs who did not scorn to make it an occasional residence. The celebrated John Casimir had his *château* in the neighbourhood at Bialystok, a magnificent structure in Italian style, once known as the Versailles of Poland, but now become a ladies' school. August III. built here a palace; and it was for some time the headquarters of Charles XII. of Sweden during his Lithuanian campaigns. It was at one period appointed that the Polish Diet should meet here for every third session, and it was at Grodno that the representatives of the ancient kingdom decreed its dismemberment, and the last phantom monarch, Stanislas Augustus, signed his abdication. Apart from these historic reminiscences, Grodno is a dull little town; it boasts no trade to speak of, and the botanic gardens, founded by Stanislas Augustus, are no longer an attraction to men of science.

In this province of Grodno there is a broad domain set apart for an "aborigine" of even earlier date than the Lithuanian, and who probably was in full possession of the deep thickets and brakes of this forest region for thousands of years before the human fancy had begun to people them with gods and demigods, and to set them apart for the worship of Perkun and the sacred serpents. The wood of Belovegie, occupying an area of many square miles around the sources of the river Narev, a

tributary of the Niemen, still protects the last representatives of the aurochs, the wild ox that in the Roman days had a wide range over Europe, and is believed by some to be the original stock from which our domestic cattle have sprung. It is supposed that a thousand head of these wild cattle still rove at will in the marshy recesses of Belovegie; and they are protected by strict forest laws. It was a favourite hunting-ground of the kings of Poland, and the Czars have occasionally visited it in pursuit of royal sport after the urus and the bear.

These imperial hunting-parties, which in the government of St. Petersburg have become almost a part of the state ceremonials, are brilliant and imposing affairs. The appointments for the chase, which takes place early in the spring, when Bruin has just awakened from his winter's sleep, leave nothing to be desired in the matter of completeness and splendour. Not only the imperial hunters themselves, but the attendant nobles and great civil and military dignitaries are enveloped in the richest furs, and outshine each other in the stylishness of their sledges and their arms. Only one feels that the poor bear has hardly a fair chance among such an army of beaters and hunters. The urus, however, is rarely disturbed in his retreat at Belovegie. By imperial ukase it is even forbidden to cut wood in the forest; and it is to be hoped that this old inhabitant, with his massy front, grand horns, and tawny bison-like mane, will long be preserved as a living relic of the Europe of the past.

Another striking natural feature of this region are the Marshes of Pinsk on the Pripet, in the neighbouring province of Minsk, itself a territory larger than Ireland. There is here, perhaps, the largest extent of fen

country to be found in Europe. Much of this tract has probably not been seen by a stranger since the beginning of last century, when Charles the Twelfth fought and waded his way through it with the fury of a Norse Berserker, cutting a path alternately with his axe and his sword, as his progress was opposed by thick forest or by Russian enemies. Eastward of the marshes is the Beresina, a branch of the Dnieper, famous in the military annals of Charles as well as of Napoleon ; and on a tributary of the Beresina is the town of Minsk, where any one who strays so far out of the beaten track of the tourist will be surprised to light upon a small theatre, in addition to the cathedral, archiepiscopal palace, and numerous churches that are the necessary features of every provincial capital, and the narrow, crooked, dirty streets that invariably mark an old Polish *bourg*. If he move farther eastward to the main stream of the Dnieper, and light on Moghilev, the chief town of the government of that name, he will come on evidences of improving conditions of industry and social well-being. Here he will find a considerable trade in a town containing within its decayed ramparts many fine buildings grouped round the great central square, and the importance of which is attested by its being the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Primate of Poland and Russia.

A short step northwards by Orcha takes us across the watershed to the valley of the deep and muddy Dwina, on which is Vitebsk, the principal town of the most northerly of the West Russian provinces. Or the journey may be made by water by one of the canals which in this as in other parts of Russia connect the head-waters

of the various streams, and are the main channels of traffic.

Farther down the Dwina are Polotsk and Duna-burg, important military posts in their day, holding the line of the river, and often subjected to siege and assault by Russians and Poles, Swedes and Livonians. Polotsk is one of the most ancient of Russian towns, having a history reaching back beyond the times of Ruric ; Duna-burg was alternately a strong place of the German knighthood and a bulwark of Russia against them. The stormy past of the city of Vitebsk also may be read on the ancient walls and towers along the left bank of the Viteba river, and the crumbling remains of its strong castle on the opposite side of the stream. The three places are now rivals in collecting the raw products and the manufactures of this and the neighbouring provinces, and forwarding them to the port of Riga, at the mouth of the Dwina.

The railways and canals have done much to stimulate the half-slumbering energies of the Western Russian provinces. These countries are full of undeveloped riches ; prominent among which are the immense forests of pine, oak, ash, beech, and maple ; and groves of lime are abundant in the government of Vilna, where bee-keeping is an extensive industry. Even the marshes and heaths can be made productive with a little care ; and this part of Russia will ere long hold a more important agricultural and commercial position than it does at present.

CHAPTER V.

THE VOLGA.



F the Dwina is followed for a little way beyond Vitebsk, we are brought back to our starting-point in the Valdai Hills. Its sources are in the sequestered valleys, steep hillsides, and wood-fringed lakelets of that prettily broken country, and its "taproot" is within a verst or two of the lake in which the great river Volga has its beginning. From this point to the outlet of the Volga in the Caspian is a distance of over nine hundred miles as the crow flies: following its great north-eastward and eastward sweeps and its many windings, we have a length of two thousand four hundred miles—greater by nearly a thousand miles than the Danube—the next largest European stream. No one can fully comprehend the phenomena of Russian history and civilization who does not have in his mind an adequate conception of the magnitude and the importance of the Volga.

With the Russians themselves it is the "Mother Volga,"—the great river of the world. It has moulded their destinies, shaped their national character, and influenced incomparably more than any other natural feature of the country their social and industrial con-

dition. It has been said that the history of Russia may be resolved into the history of four rivers and four towns in their basins—the Volkhov, and Novgorod the Great; the Dnieper, and Kiev; the Volga, and Moscow; and the Neva, and St. Petersburg: and the greatest of these is the Volga. It is the vertebral column, or rather the spinal marrow of Russia. Two hundred years ago, probably nine-tenths of the subjects of the Czars dwelt upon it; and a majority of the Russian race are still settled in its basin. It drains an area of five hundred and fifty-eight thousand square miles, equal to five times that of the British Islands. One of its affluents, the Kama, is only second to the Danube among the rivers of Europe. The Oka and its tributaries—on one of which is situated the world-famous city of Moscow—water a territory of one hundred and twenty-seven thousand square miles.

The breadth and the volume of the great stream are worthy of its magnificent length. Its channel is navigable to its source; its width from bank to bank in its middle course is little less than a mile; and it discharges its waters into the Caspian by over seventy mouths. By the comprehensive system of canals that connect the head-waters of all the important Russian rivers, it communicates with the White Sea, the Baltic, and the Euxine. Thus a canal from Tula, on the Upa, a branch of the Oka, connects the Volga with the Don; and it is proposed to form another water-way joining the two main streams at the point on their lower courses where they approach within fifty miles of each other. A double link unites the Volga to Kiev—through the upper Dnieper and through the Oka and Desna; and by the same channels there is continuous water-carriage to the Niemen and the

Baltic. An alternative route to the Baltic may be chosen by way of the Dwina. Most important of all are the routes leading under the walls of St. Petersburg to the Gulf of Finland. Leaving the Volga at Tver, the Tvertza may be followed until it merges, at Vishni-Volotchok, into the Msta, a canal-like stream that conducts to Lake Ilmen and the Volkhov ; or following up the Mologa, a lower tributary of the Volga, the head stream of the Sias can be reached ; or, again, ascending the Szektna, the Bielo or White Lake may be entered, which also reaches an arm to Lake Ladoga and its outlet the Neva. The Neva, indeed, has become, as it were, a second or European mouth of the Volga, and the set-off to its Asiatic mouth at Astrakhan. Lake Ladoga has canal communication with the White Sea ; and the great eastern tributary of the Volga, the Kama, has independent connection with the Dwina and the Arctic Ocean.

With this bewildering network of channels all feeding the main avenue with their contribution of trade, one may imagine how extensive and how varied is the commerce of which the Volga is the centre. It still continues to be to a great extent the principal route by which the products of Northern and Central Asia are exchanged for those of Europe ; but it is as the medium for the collection and distribution of the internal riches of the Russian world itself that it possesses its chief importance. No fewer than fifteen thousand vessels of various classes ply upon its bosom. In the summer season a quarter of a million of workmen from other parts of the empire resort thither. The waters are churned into foam by the paddles of five hundred steamboats. The long lines of wooden wharves are niled with

merchandise in course of being landed or shipped; and the extensive depôts are being rapidly emptied and filled again with grain and other produce of the rich provinces on the Oka and Volga.

As the great fair at Nishni-Novgorod approaches, the bustle and activity on the river and along its banks become more intense. Merchants from Odessa and Riga; native and foreign speculators in every variety of merchandise exchanged between the East and the West; Russian peasants and German colonists, anxious to sell the surplus produce of their fields; dealers in furs and peltries from Paris or Vienna, come to do business with rough trappers from the Kama or Siberia; travellers for Manchester and Sheffield houses; carriers of brick tea from the Chinese frontiers; Persians, Bokharians, and Turcomans, with silks or horses for sale; venders of precious stones and metals from the Ural range and Tobolsk; Finnish lumbermen; Tartar packmen; Kirghiz and Kalmuk shepherds and horse-rearers; fabricators of axes, nets, sheepskin coats, saddles, fur-caps, boots, each from the little villages devoted to these special industries along the Volga and its branches; with a sprinkling of professional sightseers from Western Europe and America,—are all on their flight by routes innumerable to the great mart that draws together for a few weeks one hundred thousand strangers from the ends of the earth.

The conveyance of all these passengers and their wares was formerly attended by fearful toil and suffering. The motive-power of the current could generally be employed in transporting goods down stream, but it was different where the rivers had to be ascended. The rafts of timber the

barges filled with grain, hides, bales of merchandise, and cattle, were dragged by tow-ropes up the stream by ill-treated, broken-spirited horses or oxen, or by the main strength of the *borlaks*, a class of men noted for their herculean frames and their brutalized condition. Steam has changed all that. The human beasts of burden are no longer a feature of the Volga life. Instead, powerful tug-steamers will be met breasting the current, and drawing behind them a whole flotilla of barges and other river craft.

With the setting in of winter all this busy life is suspended. The stream is frozen over from its source to its mouth, and sometimes an icy covering extends over a large portion of the salt waters of the Caspian Sea. Steamers and sailing ships are laid up for a season; the quays are deserted, the storehouses are closed, and the whir of the saw-mills is silenced. Traffic goes to sleep until the spring freshets break up the ice, and leave the channel again clear for navigation. But even in the winter the Volga is the centre of such movement as there is. Its frozen surface is the favourite route for travellers whose hard fate compels them to journey in the season of ice and snow; and its ghostly white banks echo night and day to the ring of the passing sledge-bells.

In the ordinary season of travel, nothing specially impressive can be promised to the voyager in the way of natural scenery, beyond what is afforded by the flood of waters itself rolling between its shores fringed by pine and oak. Whatever effect this may have on the mind, the interest wears off as the prospect is repeated with a few changes in detail at every turn of the river

Though the woods are partially cleared near the margin, the scenery in the upper and middle courses of the river retains the features of a forest land. Scores of thriving towns, hundreds of villages and hamlets, are scattered along the stream; but the distances are so immense that plenty of room is left between the clearings for long stretches of timber-covered shore. The left bank is generally flat, and often marshy; the right, against which the current bears in making its wide semicircular sweep, is more high and abrupt.

The upper Volga lies within the favourite habitat of the fir, the larch, and the spruce, and pine-woods are the predominating feature of its scenery. Then, in the government of Kazan, the "Oak Belt" is reached, stretching across a great part of Russia, between the fifty-sixth and fifty-third degrees of latitude; and the place of the dark and rigid forms of the cone-bearing trees is usurped by fine specimens of the oak, the beech, and the maple, that change their hues with the changing year.

In this part of its course the Volga cuts through the Zhigulinsky range of hills, which have been highly praised for their picturesque outlines and the pleasing variety of their wooded slopes. A recent visitor to the region admits that the scenery here may be called "pretty," especially when the trees wear the delicate tints of spring, or when they are arrayed in the painted glories of autumn; but it is such an agreeable surprise to meet with anything resembling a range of hills in these parts, that the traveller is willing to be easily satisfied.

Lower down, the banks become bare and shingly. The river receives no more important tributaries, and its chan-

nel is interrupted by frequent sand-banks and shoals. From the top of the sandy slopes that bound the view from the river to right and left, the eye may range over a wide steppe, from which all trace of the higher forms of vegetable life has vanished, and where the short grass is cropped by herds of sheep, horses, and camels, guarded by their Tartar owners. Near the river are the snug homesteads and well-filled granaries of the German colonists, who have been settled in this country since the time of the Empress Elizabeth, side by side with the untidy and ramshackle habitations of the Russian peasants—generally schismatics banished to these wilds for their heresies. Here and there is a small colony of Cossacks, keeping an eye over the movements of the half-nomad dwellers of the steppe; and the glaring dome of the Greek church, the neat spire of the Lutheran chapel, and the blind walls of the Mohammedan mosque testify to the variety of the prevailing creeds. Barer and barer grows the steppe as we proceed, and more and more Eastern the aspect of the scenery and the population, until near the Caspian we find the river girt in by an arid desert, roamed over by Kirghiz and Kalmuk tribes, dwellers in tents, and—the Kalmuks at least—worshippers of Buddha and his living incarnation the Grand Lama of Thibet. The river is already many feet below the level of the ocean, when it begins to break up into branches that form innumerable islands before discharging themselves by seventy mouths into the Caspian.

The principal industry practised on these islands is the sturgeon-fishery. The Volga is the most noted haunt of this noble fish, and from its source, where the

sterlet that furnishes the caviare most prized at the tables of the rich is bred, to the Caspian Sea, which yields gigantic sturgeon of weights running up to two thousand pounds, it has the full run of its waters. The capture of the sturgeon is practised in many different ways, according to the seat of the fishery—with the hook, the harpoon, and the net, from the shore and in large and small boats, by single fishers and by large incorporated companies. Sometimes "flying camps" of fishermen, counting many hundred tents, follow the fish in their migrations up or down the river; and they are accompanied by large moving establishments for extracting the roe and preparing the caviare.

When the first ice begins to cover the river, the sturgeon rush for the sea; but many of them are too late in their movements, and become blockaded in deep pools in the rivers Ural and Volga, where they crowd together in almost solid masses. This gives the opportunity for the first fishing of winter, before the ice breaks up. Crawling over the frozen surface, and peering through the ice covering and the clear water beneath, the Cossack fishermen discover the winter hiding-place of the sturgeon, which are then captured with little trouble. By traditional custom, the yield of this day's fishing is despatched immediately to the palace of the "Father Czar." Many other varieties of fish are taken in the Volga, and they form an important item in the dietary of the population.

The chase of the seal, on the shores of the Caspian, is also a pursuit that yields a considerable profit to the Kalmuks of the government of Astrakhan. It may seem strange that an animal whose presence we are accustomed

to associate only with Arctic and Antarctic climes should be found in a sea the southern portion of which washes the shores of Persia and is in the latitude of Northern Africa. But in the neighbourhood of the Volga we are constantly meeting with puzzling anomalies and unexpected contrasts. It carries us from under the Arctic circle to semi-tropical lands; from the feeding-grounds of the reindeer to those of the camel, from the neighbourhood of the white bear to the haunts of the lion and tiger; in a word, from Northern Europe to Central Asia. Asiatic and European races have alternately held sway on the river; and representatives of most of them are to be met with in its neighbourhood.

The traveller is sure to chance upon some individual or incident in which the past and the present, the culture of Europe and the barbarism of Northern Asia are oddly blended. For instance, Mr. Schuyler, in journeying down the stream, discovered that one of his fellow-passengers was Prince Ghenghiz, a lineal descendant of his conquering namesake Ghenghiz Khan. This son of the last khan of the Bukeief Horde was found to be a polished and educated gentleman, who for the greater part of the journey was deeply absorbed in the pages of a French novel. A still more incongruous experience was that of Mr. Mackenzie Wallace, whose hair nearly stood on end when, while travelling in the steppe between the Caspian and the Sea of Azov, he was accosted by a venerable person of Circassian lineaments and costume in the broadest Scottish dialect. It turned out that the "Circassian Scotsman" was a scholar educated by the missionaries sent out to this region by an Edinburgh association early in

the present century, and which had thriving stations at Astrakhan and Karass half a century ago.

The aboriginal inhabitants of the Volga countries, peoples of the widely-spread Finnish race, are certain to attract the notice of strangers by their distinctive dress, language, and features. On the main stream of the Volga itself, and chiefly in Kazan, are the Tcherimis—whom Dr. Latham would identify with the famous Arimaspi of the Greek poets—the Tchuvashs, and the Mordvins, all speaking distinct but allied tongues, and holding themselves strictly aloof from mixture with the surrounding Slavs. They are dark-complexioned, shy, taciturn people, who seem to know that their day is hopelessly past, and that their best chance of preserving their ancient languages and customs lies in adopting an attitude of suspicious reserve towards all strangers.

A more promising subject is the “Tartar” inhabitant of Kazan and the neighbouring provinces, who seems to have laid aside most of the barbarous proclivities of his ancestors, and compares not disadvantageously as a merchant, an agriculturist, and a peace-loving citizen with his Russian neighbour. The chances, indeed, are that the Tartar village furnishes a model in cleanliness, in the neat and substantial character of its architecture, and the trim and well-kept condition of the surrounding fields, which the adjoining Slav hamlet might do well to copy.

Greek proselytism has made little way among these stanch adherents of Islam, and Mohammedanism is tolerated by the state; so that the mosque of the faithful may be seen in each of these timber-built villages, and at morning and evening the cry of the

muezzin is heard on their walls, and echoes strangely amid the pine and oak avenues of the Northern forest. At the stated hours for prayer a certain proportion of the voyagers by the Volga steamer, or travellers waiting the change of horses at the wayside post-houses, will be seen to spread their strip of carpet, cast themselves reverently into an attitude of prayer, and remain absorbed in their devotions for several minutes; and it will be noticed probably that these are not the least intelligent-looking and civilized among the motley crowd. The Tartar—he is much more a Turk by descent and in his physique than a Mongol—has still, however, implanted in him some of the roving tendencies of his forefathers. He is the *beau-ideal* of the peripatetic merchant of the East, and roams far and wide with his pack of bright-coloured wearing apparel, wonderful jewellery, and nicknacks suited to male and female taste—alert, indefatigable, and full of resource, with vivacity sparkling in his keen dark eyes, and persuasion hanging on his nimble tongue.

These and other races, once omnipotent on the Volga, have sunk, however, into insignificance before the encroaching Slav; but while religion will long interpose a formidable obstacle to the absorption of the Tartar population into the general body of the Russian people, the process of Russification will probably be complete in a few generations in the aboriginal Finnish districts. Mr. Mackenzie Wallace has described the method and the rapidity with which this change is taking place in a passage which is worthy of quotation.

“During my wanderings in these northern provinces,” he says, “I have found villages in every stage of Russifica-

tion. In one, everything seemed thoroughly Finnish; the inhabitants had a reddish olive skin, high cheek-bones, obliquely-set eyes, and a peculiar costume; none of the women and very few of the men could understand Russian, and any Russian who visited the place was regarded as a foreigner. In a second, there were already some Russian inhabitants; the others had lost something of their pure Finnish type; many of the men had discarded the old costume, and spoke Russian fluently, and a Russian visitor was no longer shunned. In a third, the Finnish type was still further weakened; all the men spoke Russian, and nearly all the women understood it; the old male costume had entirely disappeared, and the old female costume was rapidly following it, and intermarriage with the Russian population was no longer rare. In a fourth, intermarriage had almost completely done its work, and the old Finnish element could be detected merely in certain peculiarities of physiognomy and accent."

Even more significant than the influence of the Volga on the commercial development of Russia has been its influence on the political destiny of the country in all periods of its history. The capitals of no fewer than nine of the modern Russian governments—Tver, Jaroslav, Kostroma, Nishni-Novgorod, Kazan, Simbirsk, Samara, Saratov, and Astrakhan—stand on the banks of the main stream itself. Ten other seats of provincial authority in Great Russia are situated on its tributaries—Perm and Viatka, in the basin of the Kama; Penza, on the Sura; and Orel, Kaluga, Tula, Riazan, Tambov, Vladimir, and the great city of Moscow itself, on the Oka and its branches.

Between the new and growing emporiums of trade are scattered the mounds and ruins marking the sites of old and fallen empires—Atel, the capital of the mysterious Khazarian kingdom, with its Judaized monarchs and precocious civilization; the head-quarters of the people who founded the Bulgaria of the Danube, Bolgary, the “great city,” among the rubbish of which are still picked up Greek, Arabic, and Armenian coins and fragments of artistic pottery and carving; Sarai, the seat of Baty Khan and his descendants, lords of the Golden Horde, whose swarms of Mongol horsemen devastated and wrung tribute from all the provinces of Eastern Europe as far as the Oder; and old Kazan, the head city of the Tartar khanate that held Russia in vassalage till the latter half of the sixteenth century.

It was under such rough masters that the young Russian nation on the Volga grew to manhood. Something has already been told of its infancy and early youth—how the nomad incursions from the East into the pleasant steppe lands on the Dnieper, the pressure of the rival Polish, German, and Swedish peoples on the west, and the chronic anarchy and civil war among the crowd of princes struggling for the supreme power, drove great hosts of the Slavs to seek shelter and security in the deep forests of the Volga; and how they there founded new states that absorbed the Finnish peoples, and waxed powerful and populous in proportion as the elder principalities and republics were weakened, until at last they were able to pluck away the palm of pre-eminence from Kiev itself, and carry off the insignia of political and ecclesiastical superiority to the banks of the Kliasma.

It was on the banks of this stream, a tributary of the Oka, that the Russian colonies in the forests first began to consolidate, and the city of Suzdal ere long became the centre of power. It had many rivals—Rostov and Murom (the original appanages of the martyred Boris and Gleb), Tver and Jaroslav, Kolomna and Riazan. But Suzdal was the kernel from which the great trunk and spreading branches of Russian autocracy arose, though its princes soon deserted it for the neighbouring city of Vladimir.

As yet, Moscow and Nishni-Novgorod were not. It was George Dolguruky of Suzdal who, while “exploiting” the country watered by the Moskva river, was struck by the commanding site occupied by a few huts on the left bank of the stream; and slaying the owner on some pretext—which the Suzdal princes had never any difficulty in inventing when lands were to be seized—he founded on the spot a log-built town, that afterwards became the capital of the Russian Empire. It was this George, it may be remembered, who first humbled the pride of Kiev, and his successor Andrew Bogoliubski who stormed and plundered that venerable city, depriving it for ever of its leading place among Russian towns. Andrew also was the first Russian autocrat; for he began systematically to bring together by every means, good or bad, the broken fragments of the Russian power and weld them into one, and patiently and mercilessly to tread down every influence both within and without that could compete with that of the prince. Following him in Suzdal was another George, who, descending the Volga on a military excursion about 1220, noticed that nature had marked out its junction with

the Oka as the site of a great commercial metropolis, and here arose Nishni or Lower Novgorod. The traditions of the Finnish inhabitants preserve the memory of the rapidity with which these "backwoods" colonizations proceeded. "The Russian prince," they sing, "descended the Volga: where he threw a handful of earth on the bank, a town sprang up; where he threw a pinch of earth, a village was born."

But an unparalleled, perhaps an irreparable calamity, was about to fall upon Russia. The Mongol hosts of Ghenghiz were already on the march when the piles for the foundations of Nishni-Novgorod were being driven. The Volga princes left their southern brethren to fight alone when the Tartars first appeared on the steppes; but on their second coming, a few years later, under the nephew of the Grand Khan Oktai, they followed a more northerly track, and the barbarian wave broke with irresistible force on the new cities of the Oka and Kliasma. For three years, 1238-40, the land was surrendered to slaughter and pillage; Moscow, Vladimir, Tver, Riazan, all the chief towns and villages, were burned, and the inhabitants massacred or driven into the woods. Grim tokens of Mongol success were sent to the Great Khan by his lieutenants in the shape of sackfuls of human ears; princes of the house of Ruric were "drowned in blood;" atrocities before undreamt of were perpetrated, not in single instances, but in a wholesale manner. The unfortunate Russians could not believe that their terrible enemies were of the human race, but regarded them as demons sent as forerunners of "Anti-christ."

All Russia bent and groaned under the storm: but

when Baty Khan withdrew from the borders of Germany to the Lower Volga, and began to build his capital at Sarai, it began slowly to right itself and adjust itself to its new burden. Half of Christian Europe had become the slaves of a horde of savage heathen horsemen. The heads of the princely houses had to make long journeys to the seat of the Khan of the Golden Horde to intrigue and plot for his favour, to grovel in the dust before him, to wed the daughters of the invader, and to sell their own daughters and sisters to the Tartar lords. Often they had to face the terrible experiences of a journey to the head-quarters of the Grand Khan, on the banks of the Amoor river, at Karakorum in the Desert of Gobi, or at Kambalu, the modern Pekin, traversing the snowy wastes, stony and sandy deserts, dense forests and great chains of mountains, in the hope of securing the *jarlikh* or investiture of their barbaric suzerain, without which their title to rule in their own state was not recognized.

These expeditions to the court of Mangu or Kublai generally occupied two or three years. Arrived there, the aspirant for favour often found that he had travelled the breadth of Asia in vain, and that a more nimble rival had already borne off the coveted honour. Sometimes the weary voyager never returned to Russia, his bones being left in some unknown spot on the way, where fatigue or hunger or robbers had overtaken him. Such a shameful journey was made by Alexander Nevski, one of the heroes of Russian history—who had defeated the Swedes on the Neva, near where the famous Nevski Prospect of St. Petersburg now runs, and the Emperor Nicholas II. was born.

surface of Lake Peipus—and his example was followed by the Grand Princes of Vladimir and Moscow who succeeded him.

These same princely personages fell into the positions of farmers-general or tax-gatherers for the Tartar khan. They collected his tribute for him—which was in the shape of a poll-tax—gaining his countenance by humbling their turbulent nobles and grinding in the dust their unlucky people. There are not many noble or heroic traits in their character. The gay, light-hearted chivalry of the cavaliers of the Dnieper, or the stern, sober patriotism of the republicans of Novgorod, is not to be looked for in the early history of the Muscovite princes; and as for the more modern culture that had spread eastward as far as Poland, they would probably have scorned it had they known of its existence. They were rude, unscrupulous, ambitious, grasping men, who stuck at no crime or baseness to accomplish their ends, and yet who claim from us a certain admiration for their remarkable astuteness, ability, and tenacity of purpose.

By such qualities the Grand Dukes of Muscovy, from the time of Alexander Nevski to that of Ivan the Terrible—but most notably of all that other Ivan surnamed “the Great” and “the Binder”—extended the limits of their little principality on the Moskva until it embraced not only all the lands on the Upper Volga and its branches above Nishni-Novgorod, but also the Upper Don countries, parts of the old Slav states on the Dnieper, Novgorod and its vast dominions on the slope to the Arctic Sea. They had done this so quietly and gradually as to excite the minimum of resistance from the states absorbed and of jealousy from their Tartar

masters. The methods they employed were fraud and *finesse*, treaties, marriage alliances, assumption of guardianship over minors, steady, persistent extensions and pretensions of authority—any means rather than force, but force if other means failed, as they often did.

While the vassal was becoming strong, the Tartar overlord was growing decrepit. One united and chivalric attempt only had been made to throw off the barbarian yoke. The Mongol Horde of Baty had adopted the faith of Mohammed; had had its day of great power; and was now breaking up into contending factions, and seemed on the point of dissolution. The Russian princes thought their opportunity had come. A great army was assembled under the Grand Duke Dimitri Donskoi, and marched out to battle, amid miracles and omens and priestly blessings—St. Vladimir in person, it was said, appearing at their head and leading the charge. The Kipchaks and their allies were totally overthrown in a battle fought in 1380 in the plain of Kulikovo on the banks of the Don. The victory happened in an unlucky hour for Russia. Another—and the last—devastating swarm from Central Asia swept over it. Again Moscow and the chief cities were burned—this time not by Mongol tribes from the Altai, but by the Turki tribes from Turkestan, under the orders of the conquering Tamerlane; and the place of the Golden Horde was taken by the three Tartar khanates of Crim Tartary, Astrakhan, and Kazan, the last of these falling heir to Russia's allegiance.

It was not till Ivan the Terrible's time that Muscovy was strong enough to throw off the last shackles of the Tartar domination: and by the conquest of Kazan in

1552, and of Astrakhan in 1554, the first substantial instalments were paid of the heavy debt of retribution which Asia had accumulated in Europe. The destinies of Russia were again in its own hands. Europe stared at the wild creature that issued forth from the woods and claimed a place in the commonwealth of Christian nations. There was so much that was rude and Oriental in the government, the laws, the customs, the religious ideas, and the superstitions of the Muscovites, that it was small wonder that the western peoples hesitated to admit them within the civilized pale. It was not so much that Russia had not had a fair start, like the others, but that it had passed through a long period of suspended animation, while they were enjoying an active and progressive social life. Its sudden resurrection and appearance "in the councils of Europe," after three centuries of hibernation in the forests of the Volga, was as if a rough feudal baron of the *Front-de-Bœuf* type had presented himself at the board of Queen Elizabeth, and taken a seat between Sir Philip Sydney and Lord Bacon.

Travellers, merchants, and diplomatists from the west, who began to flock to the capital of the Czar, wondered and laughed over the astonishing rudeness of the court manners, the extreme brutality and ignorance even of the highest nobility, and the primitive abasement of the people; and the remarkable doings of the Russian ambassadors at the European courts were observed with the half-amused, half-contemptuous interest with which we would regard the behaviour of a deputation from the Negus of Abyssinia. The descriptions given by early English travellers and traders to Muscovy .

are full of almost incredible details concerning the manners of the capital, and even of the Czar's palace, the uncouth and barbarous demeanour of personages of the blood-royal, the gross savagery and turbulence of the boyards, and the extreme enslavement of the peasants.

The crack of the knout was heard in the court as well as in the humblest hut in the land; and down to our own day it has continued to be an ominous symbol of Russia's degradation. Not only the old Grand Princes, but Czars of the Romanoff line were in the habit of publicly whipping personages of the highest rank with their own hand. Ivan the Terrible beat and slew his boyards, and killed his eldest son Ivan with blows of his "iron staff."

It is recorded of the Czar Alexis I., the second of the Romanoffs, that so mild and easy of temper was he that he never allowed himself to go beyond "kicks and cuffs." His son, Peter the Great, had his first wife, Eudoxia, repeatedly knouted by his orders; and his only son, the Czarevitch Alexis, died under the lash. Of an aristocracy according to our notions, or of aristocratic feelings, there was indeed none in Russia. During the three hundred years of Tartar rule the blood of the noble families had received large accessions from Mongol and Turkish stocks, though little of such admixture had taken place among the lower orders. Tartar *mirzas* were in many cases appointed lords of the Russian soil and peasantry, and gradually embraced Christianity. The great noble was rather after the Eastern than of the Western model. Under an autocratic government every effort has been made to bridle the power of the nobility and remove out of the way all danger of pos-

sible rivalry from this source, with the result that the Czar has become, in a more literal sense than other Christian sovereigns, the sole "fountain of honour," and rank in Russia a matter of official position rather than of hereditary claim.

With the higher and highest ranks of society so barbarous and uncultured, it may be left to imagination to picture the depths of ignorance and superstition in which the body of the Russian people were steeped. In the course of three centuries the iron of the Tartar fetters had entered their souls. They had broken the links of foreign oppression, but the chain of ancient habit still bound them. They had been shut out from all progressive influences, and thrown on their own resources, and these had not sufficed to keep them abreast of the times; for the Russians are more distinguished for their quickness in imitating the arts and industries of their neighbours than in originating new movements in thought or labour. If they looked towards the west, they met only the averted and hostile faces of rivals—Poles, Swedes, and Germans—opposed to them on grounds of nationality and religion. The more distant countries of Europe—England and France—which had not as yet begun to feel jealousy or apprehension of the new nation that had just achieved its emancipation, were too remote to have a powerful influence on their development, though English merchantmen began to navigate the White Sea, and our flag even floated on the Caspian, while the faces of many of our countrymen—agents of the Muscovy Company, under the protection of the Czar—were to be seen in the crowds that thronged the streets of Moscow. But away from the seats of com-

mercial movement the customs, ideas, and beliefs of times anterior even to feudalism—a patriarchal type of society, which had elsewhere been long obliterated—existed in almost unimpaired strength; and, fostered by many causes, they have continued more or less in force down to the present day.

The chief of all the European streams is almost the only one that does not mingle its waters, with those of the other rivers of the earth, in the great circumfluent ocean, pouring them instead into a salt lake of Inner Asia. The Russian people also—the most powerful, in numbers, at least, of the European nations—had their faces long turned in the same direction as the current of the Volga, and dwelt, first by reason of an evil destiny, and afterwards from prejudice and ignorance, a race apart from others, and taking little share in their interests and aims.

At length, however, a giant in energy and intellect arose in their midst—a man who had at once the keenest vision for their defects and the most absolute power over their persons and property. Peter the Great seized the lagging Russian nation fiercely and roughly by the throat, and dragged it from its moping seclusion in the Volga forests into the full light of modern civilization. Keeping a vice-like hold upon it, he entered on one of the most stupendous “matches against time” ever witnessed in the history of the world, spurning it forward with savage blows and kicks, until he had worn out in the struggle his own herculean strength, but had launched his country on the track of progress on which the nations of the west had already embarked.

From that moment the political supremacy began to leave the banks of the Volga; but Moscow long continued, and still remains, in the most essential respects, the centre of Russia's social and religious life, as of its commercial and industrial activity. In the neighbourhood of the great river is still to be found all that is most characteristic of Russian nature and feelings, observances and prejudices. "Old Russia"—the Russia of Czar Ivan the Terrible, before Peter came with his "reforms" to change the fixed and venerated features of the ancient national life—may be discovered with little trouble under a covering, sometimes a very thin covering, of modern civilization. Moscow has been robbed of much of its importance by its rival, but it is still the symbol and the nucleus of the conservative Muscovy of the past, which is not extinct, but only slowly yielding to the influences of inevitable change. St. Petersburg may be the capital of Russia, but Moscow is still the most remarkable, the most typical, and the most interesting of Russian cities.

half way between the Oka and the parent stream of the Volga. Around it are grouped the old Russ principalities, which the ambition of the Grand Princes of Moscow added one by one to their dominions, until they had gathered in their hands a power capable of grappling with their old Asiatic conquerors, and of rivalling the kingdoms of Europe. Moscow grew at the cost of the surrounding cities, many of which were its elders in date by hundreds of years. It was the policy of its princes to focus here the power, the prestige, and the sanctity with which they surrounded their throne. The impetus and the importance which it obtained in these days have preserved to it, down to our own times, the long lead that it took of its rivals. Though it has been discrowned and almost deserted by its Czars, it is a city of six hundred thousand souls, a metropolis that in wealth and population exceeds nearly tenfold any other city of Great Russia.

The aspect of Moscow is not unworthy of the glorious memories and strange and terrible vicissitudes of its past, or of the important rôle it still plays in history. Built, like Rome, on seven hills, it does not yield, in the eyes of half of Europe at least, to that imperial city itself in the grandeur and sadness of its associations, or in the beauty and sacredness of its monumental remains. Venice does not present aspects more unique, bizarre, and magnificent to the lover of the picturesque. Paris has not witnessed more tragic scenes of unmuzzled human passion and high-strung heroism, of national glory and humiliation. Moscow is a picture of Russian history and the Russian character limned in timber and in stone. It is the true growth of the soil,

the highest development, so far, of the national genius ; for St. Petersburg—a mere European city, an imitation of modern Paris—is no more to be compared with it in historical interest and suggestive individuality of type than it is in antiquity. The first glimpse of “Holy Mother Moscow of the White Walls” surprises, delights, and puzzles the visitor, however much he has familiarized himself beforehand with the tale of its marvels and its charms.

Looking down upon Moscow from the belfry of one of its hundred towers, or from its flanking hills, we seem to gaze on a scene that is half in the dreamland of fable, and half founded on a solid base of gross earth—on a city that has been the joint product of the labours of Eastern afreets and unlettered rustics. Broad and long, like the realms of the Great White Czar, the wilderness of roofs stretches out below you, with wide blanks here and there between the masses of building that speak of space and loneliness in the midst of a teeming population.

No order or plan can be traced in the arrangement of the crooked streets and lanes, and of the broad squares, crescents, and places ; and no standard of taste with which we are familiar has regulated the proportion and the form of the buildings. Bewildering contrasts of colour, fantastic combinations of all styles—Asiatic and European, old and new, barbaric and civilized—everywhere meet the eye. The sun blazes on the gilded crosses, balls, vanes, and crescents, the silver-tipped minarets, and the domes—green, azure, and vermillion, or spangled with stars—of four hundred Christian churches, many of which might easily be mistaken

for Mohammedan mosques. Fortress, temple, and triumphal arch; campanile, steeple, and cupola; grim palaces of boyards of the old regime; gloomy convent walls; Greek porticos of seminaries, theatres, and literary and scientific institutions, and light and airy edifices for the treatment of disease or the succour of the orphan or the aged poor, are mingled together, as if with set purpose to bring out the wonderful diversity between ancient and modern canons of taste and modes of living. The green painted metal roofs of the houses, the orchards of fruit-trees, the avenues of lime, maple, and elm, the grassy slopes and green lawns offer a grateful relief to the eye that ranges over this city of palaces, hovels, and gardens. Through the midst of the buildings flows the Moskva, bearing barges loaded with farm produce or manufactured wares, crossed by handsome bridges, and overhung by the walls and towers and sloping banks of turf and greenery of the famous Kremlin.

If we descend into the streets, and thread our way through the busy, winding thoroughfares, the impression made by the general view of the city is deepened rather than removed. The contrasts of types and ideas is visible in the people as well as in the houses, though it is true that the progress of "modern improvement" is every day stealing from Moscow some feature that marked its half Oriental individuality. Riches and poverty live "cheek by jowl." The cottage of the humble citizen is next door to the spacious mansion of the noble. The lowly wooden booth of the small trader stands between the glaring front of the Orthodox church, surmounted by its towering belfry, and the imposing residence of some great city merchant. The endeavour to

discern plan and symmetry in the direction and connection of the streets is more difficult even than when viewed from above. You may roam by the half-hour through crooked lanes and humble thoroughfares, that look as if they had been removed bodily from some small and decaying country town, and suddenly emerge on a broad avenue or handsome boulevard, thronged with a well-dressed crowd, and lined with fashionable shops that would be an ornament to any capital in Europe.

The city has been rebuilt since the great "burning" of 1812. The materials are new, but the old lines have been followed and the old types generally perpetuated; a proof of the strong conservatism that is so striking a feature in the character of the people of Moscow. But though at first sight there is no more sign of method in the arrangement of its streets than is shown in the threads of a spider's web, a closer examination reveals, if not a plan, at least indications of a process of growth.

Like a tree, it shows its age by the concentric rings that surround its core—the Kremlin. Close under the eastern walls of the citadel is grouped the Kitai-gorod, the "Chinese City," as some translate it, while others derive the name from that of the natal town of the mother of Ivan the Terrible, in Podolia. This is the mart and place of business of Moscow, and is filled with shops, warehouses, stores, and offices, besides containing the Great Bazaar, where the riches of Asia are exchanged for the products of Western countries. Forming an envelope around the Palace of the ancient Czars and the Kitai-gorod, but not crossing to the right bank of the river, is the Bielo-gorod, or "White City," the part of the town chiefly affected by the older families of Moscow.

and where are situated many of the modern public buildings, such as the Town Hall, the University, the Mint, and the great Riding-school, where, under a roof five hundred and sixty feet in length by one hundred and fifty-eight feet in breadth, unsupported by pillar or prop of any kind, the troops of the Emperor may be exercised and reviewed during rain or deep snow. Beyond the "White City" is an inner line of boulevards, marking the old city boundary; and an outer line, surrounding the Kremlin at a distance of a mile and a half from that centre, encloses the Zemlianoi-gorod, or "Earthen City," so called from the earthen bulwarks with which it was defended. In this part of the city are many of the more fashionable streets and squares, and also many of the most squalid and poverty-stricken localities. Outside of all these, but within the modern line of fortifications, which are no less than twenty-five miles in circuit, are the "suburbs," where there are still great unbuilt-on spaces, occupied by gardens, parade-grounds, parks, and ponds.

If Moscow is the crown of Russia, then the Kremlin is the crown of Moscow. What scenes it has witnessed since the site of the "Church of the Redeemer in the Wood"—the most central of the group of palaces and cathedrals—was part of the primeval forest! What torrents of blood have flowed here since Prince George Dolguruky, coveting the land, slew the owner, and stuck his spear in the grassy bluff above the Moskva in sign of possession! Here the political power that had fled from Kiev, and had found temporary refuge first at Suzdal and then at Vladimir, was at length established in a suitable stronghold, where it could maintain itself and grow in strength for many centuries. Here the

kindred plants of autocratic and sacerdotal authority throve and twined themselves together, sending their united roots deep down into the natures of a superstitious and conservative people; and a Tartarized court and a priesthood saturated with Byzantine ideas became the moulders of the destinies of one of the most powerful races in Europe.

The walls of the Kremlin are two miles in circuit, and the space enclosed within them is triangular in shape, and bounded on its three sides by the Moskva, the Bielo-gorod, and the Kitai-gorod. Seen from the river, or from any point of vantage within the city or in its outskirts, the high, white, crenellated walls, the tall and massive palace fronts, the clustering domes and spires of the cathedrals, monasteries, nunneries, arsenals, treasuries, senate-houses, and patriarchal residences that are crowded together on this spot, make a brave and majestic show.

From the "White City" the Kremlin is separated by tastefully laid out shrubberies and walks, and from the Kitai-gorod by the wide space of the "Red Place." It is here that the principal entrances to the citadel are found, most notable of all being the "Holy Gate" of Our Saviour of Smolensk, over which is the miracle-working image to which all that enter, from the humblest peasant to the highest in the land—the Czar himself—must do obeisance. Other celebrated portals are those of St. Nicolas of Mojiask, before which oaths were taken in former times; and the Gate of the Trinity, built, like the tower over the Saviour Gate, by a Scotchman named Galloway, in the pay of the Czar Michael Romanoff.

Strange tales these walls might tell, if they could speak, of the scenes they witnessed while Russian history was being written in blood and flame at their feet. A score of times the invader battered at these gates; and often he gained an entrance, but always to retire at last worsted by the patience and devotion of the faithful Moscovites. In 1233 and 1293 the city was sacked by the Golden Horde; three times towards the close of the fourteenth century it was assailed by Olgerd and the Lithuanians; in 1381 it was captured and laid waste by Tokhtamish, the lieutenant of Tamerlane; in 1571, Devlet Ghirei, Khan of Crim Tartary, seized and burned it nearly to the ground; in the "Time of Troubles" that followed the extinction of Ivan the Terrible's family it was held alternately by Zaporogian and Don Cossacks, Tartars, and Poles; and between 1682 and 1698 it witnessed the sanguinary insurrections and massacres of the "Streltsi," or national guards.

Often the guardians of the Kremlin gates watched armed men fighting in every street, or the whole city wrapped in flames that licked the topmost pinnacle of its towers, melted the lead from the roofs of the most sacred churches, and brought the consecrated bells and blazing rafters crashing to the pavement. In the conflagration that followed the incursion of the Nogai Tartars, no fewer than one hundred thousand of the citizens are said to have lost their lives. Terrible pestilences have visited Moscow in the train of fire, war, and civil commotion; and during a visit of the plague last century thousands of the people knelt day and night in the Red Place before the holy image on the

principal gate, praying in agony that the pest might be removed from their homes.

Scenes of triumph and peace as well as of horror have been enacted here. The *vetché* bell of Novgorod and the insignia of the Grand Princes of Kiev have been conveyed hither, as was, at a much later date, the throne of the Polish kings. Solemn counsel and rude wassail were held within by the old Grand Princes amid their boyards and *okolnitches*; and through the gateway of the Kremlin, Sophia Palæologus, daughter of the Emperor of the East, entered to become the wife of Ivan the Great, bringing with her foreign tastes for arts and refinement, artists, architects, and musicians, and the germs of a renaissance in Russia such as had already been transplanted from the East to Italy and France. Ivan the Terrible bore through it the spoils of the conquered khanates of the Volga, and, with the aid of his Italian artificers, erected in front of the Holy Gate the famous Church of St. Basil the Blessed, in memory of the overthrow of Kazan.

The triumphs of Peter the Great and Catherine II. have been celebrated here; but the supreme crisis of Moscow's fate, the saddest and most glorious hour in her eventful history, was when the "grand army" under Napoleon, cresting the "Sparrow Hills" to the west of the city, came in sight of its leagues of glittering spires, and filed in through the Nicolas Gate into the citadel of the Czars. It is a poor heart that can read without a thrill of conflicting sympathy and pity the story of how, in October 1812, the citizens of Moscow set fire with their own hands to their holy and beautiful city, the pride of many generations, thus offering, as has been said the

grandest sacrifice ever laid on the altar of patriotism; and how the discomfited invaders, after blowing up part of the buildings of the Kremlin, were compelled to abandon the prize that had brought them so far only to turn to ashes in their grasp, and begin that terrible retreat in the dead of winter which so few of them were to survive.

The central shape that lifts itself above the group on the Kremlin is the Tower of Ivan Veliki—"John the Great"—built, however, not by that aggressive prince, but by the Czar Boris Godunoff, the chosen of the boyards when the line of Ruric failed. Boris has left many monuments; for though termed a "usurper," and though he fastened the yoke of serfage on the necks of the people, he was a great patron of art. None of his works, however, is so imposing as this. The tower, measured to the top of the cross, is three hundred and twenty-five feet in height, and from the uppermost of its five stories a magnificent view is obtained of the city.

A great chime of bells, the largest weighing sixty-four tons, is suspended in the tower; and when at midnight on Easter-eve these monsters "give tongue," mingling their deep voices with the fainter sounds of the innumerable other bells of Moscow and with the deafening roar of the batteries of artillery, and when all the population of the city seem gathered in the "Great Place" below, bearing lighted tapers in their hands, it needs an effort on the part of the spectator to realize that he is actually living in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and that the people around him are not, as Mr. Wallace almost fancied them to be, a gathering of the ancient citizens "called out to repel a Tartar horde

thundering at their gates." The Russian people have a passion for bells, but the most unwieldy product of this national taste is the "Czar Kolokol"—the Czar of Bells—whose damaged form rests on a pedestal of stone at the foot of the Tower of Ivan Veliki. It is said to have been tolled at the birth of Peter the Great; but for nearly two hundred years past it has rested on the ground, with a piece weighing eleven tons broken out of its side. The total weight of the bell is no less than four hundred and forty-four thousand pounds—about two hundred tons—and its height is upwards of nineteen feet.

To the west of Ivan Veliki, and between it and the ancient Palace of the Czars, are the most famous of the ecclesiastical buildings in the Kremlin enclosure,—the Cathedral of the Assumption, where the Emperors of Russia are crowned, and where are the tombs of the sainted metropolitans of Moscow; the Cathedral of Michael the Archangel, where are the last resting-places of the line of Czars down to Peter the Great; the Cathedral of the Annunciation, with its floor paved with agates and other precious stones, and in which the former rulers of Russia were baptized and married; the Church of the Redeemer, the first Christian church in Moscow, and where repose the ashes of Stephen of Perm, the earliest Russian martyr; and the Sacristy, or Meeting-place of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church, an immense building, wherein are preserved, amid other curiosities and treasures, the robes, ornaments, and relics of the old patriarchs, and the "sacred oil," transmitted from Constantinople by the first Christian missionaries, with which the Emperors are anointed.

It is on the occasion of this ceremony of coronation that Moscow regains for a little time the semblance of its old self. At other times, the halls of the ancient and modern palaces on the Kremlin are silent, except to the tread of the sentinel or the sight-seer. For weeks and months beforehand the city has been on the tiptoe of expectation, and the loyal ardour of the people has been at fever heat. Civil and military officials, deputies, ecclesiastics, troops, visitors from every part of the empire, have gathered thither to witness or take part in the fêtes and religious exercises that are conducted with the utmost splendour and solemnity, and with a punctilious regard to the minutest detail of the old established forms.

First, the uncrowned Czar comes to take up his quarters at the Petrovsky Palace, a large Gothic structure outside the city, in the direction of St. Petersburg. After three days comes the entry in state into Moscow. The city dignitaries meet their Emperor at the Tverskaia Gate; the military authorities of the Kremlin receive him at the Holy Portal, where he doffs his hat reverently to the sacred figure that guards it; the senate await him in front of the Cathedral of the Assumption, and the members of the Holy Synod, with the Metropolitan, salute him within the porch. He makes the round of the tombs of the old Czars in the Church of the Archangel; and then, ascending the steps of the Red Staircase leading to the palace of his ancestors, he turns round upon the terrace at the top to show the people "the light of his eyes." It was down these steps that the "false Dimitri," Gregory Otrepief, a monk of the Miracle Monastery at the Holy Gate, who simulated the

murdered son of Ivan the Terrible, after being lifted into the throne by the wave of popular favour, was flung by the boyards, and stabbed to death in the court below. The insurgent Streltsi, in the troublous early years of Peter the Great, entered the palace by this way, and cut to pieces the great minister Matvief, and other relatives and friends of the young Czar, before the eyes of his mother; and by the Red Staircase also Napoleon and his generals formally entered the imperial residence. Within is the Gold Court, where was anciently the audience chamber of the Czars, and where many a turbulent and bloody scene has been enacted, as when Ivan the Terrible transfixed with his iron staff the foot of the messenger sent to him by his old general Kurbski, after the latter had taken refuge with the Poles.

Such reminiscences as these, however, are out of place on an occasion like the coronation of the Emperor of All the Russias; and we pass with the stately procession to the portion of the palace facing the Moskva, and which, like the Gold Court, and the great halls of the orders of St. Andrew and St. Alexander Nevski, and the picture gallery connected with them, has been renovated or entirely rebuilt by the Emperors Paul and Nicolas.

In the Great Palace fronting the river—a stately and lofty structure, in the composition of which a great many diverse styles are oddly mingled—the Emperor resides while the indispensable preliminaries to the coronation—the military reviews, the proclamations in the Red Place, and at market and city gates, the vigils and fasts at the holy shrines of the patriarchs—are duly

gone through, and the regalia of Russia—the orb, the sceptre, the imperial robes of purple, and the great and little crowns—are removed in state by the grandees of the realm from the Palace of Facets. This last is the only portion of the old pile that has survived the ravages of fire and time. Below are the banqueting hall and the throne, and the upper chambers formed the "Terem," where the females of the imperial family were formerly immured.

In these darkling vaulted rooms did many generations of Czarinas and elderly spinsters of the blood-royal pass their days in more than Oriental seclusion. In the imperial family the old Russian ideal of woman's domestic virtues and position—an ideal derived not from the Mohammedan conquerors, but from Byzantine sources—could be carried out to the letter. Down to the days of Peter, it was treason even for high officers of state to see the wife or the daughters of the Czar. If a medical man were called in to prescribe for one of the ladies, the windows were darkened, and he had to feel the pulse of his patient through a covering of gauze. No subject was thought good enough to espouse a daughter of the Lord of Muscovy, and ignorance and prejudice were still barriers strong enough to keep out all foreign suitors. So these high-born princesses pined and soured and shrivelled in loneliness; filling up the hours by religious exercises, and such small intrigues and jealousies as will naturally arise among a score or so of women of any rank who are cooped up together with nothing better to do; and scandal said that they occasionally solaced themselves with vodka, and even found means, in spite of the guards set over them of receiving visits from their lovers

It was Peter's mother — Natalie Naryskin, wife of the Czar Alexis—who first, to the horror of the sticklers for old customs, drew aside the corner of her carriage curtains when she appeared in public; and it was Peter himself who opened the prison doors to these forlorn captives and let in the light of day upon the Terem, savagely shaving the head, knouting, banishing to a nunnery, and finally divorcing his wife Eudoxia because she clung stubbornly to the conservative notions of the imperial family life. The Grand Dukes and Czars had a singular and thoroughly Eastern method of choosing a mistress of the Terem, and when it was thought right that the "father" of the people should marry, the pick of the maidens in the empire were sent to Moscow, and from among these, after preparation such as Esther had to undergo before being admitted into the presence of Ahasuerus, and careful comparison, the royal choice was made. Peter, though he chose as his second mate the Livonian peasant girl who was crowned in the Kremlin as Catherine I., definitely laid aside this archaic practice—which was surely more honoured in the breach than in the observance—and the Empresses of Russia have since been chosen from the princely and royal families of Germany.

This reminds us, however, that their imperial highnesses are waiting in the Palace of Paul I. for the coronation ceremony. Moving in grand procession, accompanied by the insignia of state, and with the eyes of all Moscow fixed upon them, the actors in this imposing pageant descend again the Red Staircase and enter the Cathedral of the Assumption. The Emperor and Empress walk under a canopy supported by thirty-two general officers.

The "royal doors" are passed, and the High Priest and King of Holy Russia is within the most sacred of Moscow's fanes. For once the Church of the Assumption has thrown off its air of shadowy mystery and gloom, and the pictures, images, and icons of patriarch, saint, and evangelist gleam in the light of a thousand tapers. Small as this building is in size and grotesque in decoration and arrangements, it is perhaps the most interesting church in Russia, and is the central spot round which Russian religious feeling revolves. "So fraught is it with recollections," says Dean Stanley, "so teeming with worshippers, so bursting with tombs and pictures from the pavement to the cupola, that its smallness of space is forgotten in the fulness of its contents." And M. Rambaud, describing its normal appearance, says: "One can hardly believe that the Assumption is of the same date as the luminous churches of the renaissance. The architect"—the Italian Fioraventi—"or those who inspired him, has here tried to reproduce the mysterious obscurity of the old temples of Egypt and the East. The cathedral has no windows, but only close-barred shot-holes, which admit into the interior a doubtful light, like that which filters through the hole of a dungeon. This pale glow touches the massive pillars covered with a tawny gold; on the tarnished background stand out, severe and grave, the faces of the saints and doctors; it dwells here and there on the relief of the golden *iconostase* (altar-screen), covered by miraculous images, sprinkled with diamonds and jewels; it hardly lights the representation of the 'Last Judgment' and the 'End of the World' painted on the walls. All the upper part of the temple is partly enveloped in

shadow, like the crypts of the Pharaohs ; the pictures which cover the vault can hardly be distinguished. The artist has evidently made them for the eye of God, not for that of man."

In the centre of the nave, facing the high altar, a platform is placed, on which are set the two thrones of Ivan the Great and Michael Romanoff, and on these the Emperor and Empress solemnly take their seats. Then his majesty, having made his public "confession of faith," invests himself with the robe of purple and other symbols of royalty, and, as the sole fountain of power and authority in the realm, places the crown upon his own head. At the same moment the great bell in the Tower of Ivan Veliki rolls out his ponderous notes, which are responded to by the four hundred lesser chimes of Moscow, the roar of the cannon, the cheering of the populace, and chanting of the cathedral choir, all announcing, by a deafening and impressive volume of sound, that the Autocrat of the Russias, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Finland, has formally assumed to himself the duties of the lord and father of his people. At the foot of the altar the Emperor is anointed with the "holy oil," and the procession having returned to the palace, the solemn ceremonies of the day end with the coronation banquet in the great banqueting hall, where the Czar sits enthroned, apart, clad in his imperial robes and adorned with sceptre and orb, while his nobles feast around him.

Behind the central masses of buildings—the palaces, cathedrals, senate houses, and courts of law—and stretching along the side of the enclosure adjoining the Bielogorod, are the Treasury and Arsenal of the Kremlin. The

former is a vast museum of the treasures of gold, silver, and precious stones, and the objects of historical and antiquarian interest, gathered here by the monarchs of Russia from time immemorial. Nowhere, perhaps, can such a collection of "barbaric pearl and gold" be seen. Thrones, crowns, and coronation robes, crusted with rubies, diamonds, and sapphires; drinking-cups, caskets, candelabra, ewers, and flagons of massive silver; jewellers' and goldsmiths' work of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, military standards and trophies of war, old armour and weapons; horse-trappings and antique carriages; relics of dead Czars and Czarinas, and mementoes of glorious or disastrous events of Russian history, are arranged in a long suite of apartments, through which the visitor might roam for days and still find that he had barely seen the moiety of the rich and curious objects they contain. Some of these one would have fancied the head of the state would have preferred to have hidden from public sight as too suggestive of the dark stains of Russian dynastic history and the evanescence of royal splendours—such, for instance, as the murderous "staff" of Ivan the Terrible, and the boots with which Peter the Great kicked many a refractory noble.

In the Sacristy is a similar collection of ecclesiastical relics of great antiquity and rarity, comprising mitres, rosaries, mantyases, omophorions, sakkos, and other episcopal vestments, crosses, reliquaries, panagias, images, icons, church plate, croziers, and the rest of the sacerdotal paraphernalia, many of them of great value and elaborate workmanship, the gifts of pious Czars, boyards, or commoners to the Church or its dead patriarchs and bishops.

The most notable object in the neighbourhood of the Arsenal is the Tzar-Pushka—the monster or “Czar” cannon—cast in the reign of Feodore, brother and predecessor of Peter the Great, and which weighs nearly forty tons. Along the walls are arranged the ordnance captured by the Russians in war, many of them pieces taken from the French during the retreat from Moscow.

But we have already lingered too long within the enclosure of the Kremlin, though we have only peeped into the interior of one or two of its thirty churches, and barely glanced at the associations, sad and terrible, glorious and revolting, with which its palaces are thronged. It is time to pass out again from the deserted halls of the Czars into the din of the city; and emerging into the Red Place, an object strikes the eye that is fitted to dazzle and stun the most phlegmatic of sightseers.

The Cathedral of Vassili Blajennoi (“St. Basil the Beatified”) lifts up its whimsical shape and flaunts its gorgeous plumage almost in front of the Holy Gate. Travellers, historians, and archæologists have cudgelled their brains to find something wherewith to liken this amazing edifice. Théophile Gautier describes it as a church surmounted by six or eight round cupolas, all of different heights and forms, “some beaten into facets, others cut; these carved into diamond points, like the ananas, those in spirals; others again, marked with scales, lozenge-shaped, or celled like a honeycomb.” From its topmost turret to the pavement, Vassili Blajennoi is daubed with glaring and crude colours; in plan and decoration it is more like the insane dream of the architect of the peacock throne of Ava than a sober Christian sanctuary. Rambaud figures it as “the most

brilliant bird of tropical forests that had suddenly taken the shape of a cathedral ;” and Haxthausen compares it to “an immense dragon with shining scales, crouching and sleeping.”

The architect was an Italian artist, well acquainted with the grand, grave, and simple church edifices of his own land ; but we seem to see more here of the distorted and fanatical character of its founder, Ivan the Terrible, and of the crude and barbarous tastes of Tartarized Russia, than of any foreign genius. It was built in commemoration of the conquest of Kazan, above the bones of an idiot saint and miracle-worker, whose shrine is shown within ; and so pleased was Ivan with the work that, as tradition says, he rewarded the architect by putting out his eyes, “in order that he might never build another like it.”

Another noticeable object in the Red Place is the “Lobnoe Mesto,” or tribune of stone, supposed to have originally been a place of execution, and from whence the Czars harangued the people, and the Metropolitans blessed the Muscovite armies ere they marched out to war. In front of it took place a scene of blood, in which a Czar—Peter the Great—wielded the axe of the headsman,—the wholesale execution of the Streltsi, that put a final end to that body and their dangerous uprisings and intrigues. Finally, in the Red Place, and facing the Kremlin wall, is the national monument to the boyard Pojarsky and the peasant - butcher Minin, whose patriotism saved Russia in the terrible “time of troubles” that followed the extinction of the old line of Czars, the appearances of the “false Dimitris,” and the invasion of the Poles, and led the way to the establishment of a new royal race in

the person of the child Michael Romanoff, the descendant of a family of Prussian immigrants. The old Romanoff House, where Anastasia, wife of Ivan the Terrible, was nurtured, where her nephew, the Patriarch Philarete, lived, and his son, the Czar Michael, was born, is shown in one of the neighbouring streets in the Kitai-gorod; and the curious may still see there the arrangements and furnishings of an ancient boyard household.

The other sights of Moscow we must pass over quickly, though many of them are of great interest:—for instance, the chapel dedicated to the Iberian Mother of God, the miraculous picture in which is to this day carried periodically through the city to heal the sick and bring blessings; the Church of Our Lady of Georgia, erected in commemoration of the first Russian annexations beyond the Caucasus; the Temple of Our Saviour, an immense structure near the stone bridge over the Moskva, begun in 1812, to celebrate the repulse of the French, and never likely to be finished, as it has been found that its foundations have been laid on a bog; the Suwaroff Tower, erected by Peter the Great, and often the scene of his orgies with his foreign favourites, and now used as a reservoir of the city water supply; the Red Gate, a grand triumphal arch erected by Peter on his return from the Azov expedition, by which Russian territory was first made to touch the basin of the Black Sea; the Empress's Palace on the Smolensk road; the University, the Public Library, and museums, etc. Neither must we forget that peculiarly Muscovite institution, the Foundling Hospital, where every year twelve thousand infants who have been abandoned by their mothers are admitted and nurtured at an annual cost to the state of some £20 000

Many monastic institutions are scattered round the suburbs of the city, and in former times they often served it as outer fortifications against the inroads of Tartar and Pole. Celebrated among these is the Sunon-off Monastery, founded five centuries ago by the famous St. Sergius of Troitsa, who here blessed Prince Dimitri before he set out to overthrow the Golden Horde on the banks of the Don. From the top of the belfry (three hundred and thirty feet high) of this monastery, which stands on the most elevated site near Moscow, a magnificent sight can be had of the city and its surroundings. In the Novo Deviche Monastery, close to the Moskva, Boris Godunoff took refuge in the "troubles," and was hence called by the boyards to reign for a time over Russia; and it was here that the Regent-Princess Sophia was compelled to retire when her strong-willed brother Peter was old enough to seize the power from her ambitious hands.

But better worth study than any of the ancient monuments or modern sights of Moscow are the citizens of the old capital. They entertain many strangers. Visitors come from enormous distances and settle down in their midst; and few places present such opportunities of studying the costume, physiognomy, and manners of Asian and European races as the Great Bazaar at Moscow. The Tartar element in the population is considerable; and there is a strong body of German artisans and merchants, with a sprinkling of many other nationalities. But the people of each race dwell as a rule apart, and form little coteries among themselves.

The true Moscovite does not care to mingle with them except in the places of trade. He is proud and not a little

jealous of the honour of being a citizen of Holy Moscow and a subject of the White Czar ; and he does not consider that any stranger or pilgrim that is within the city's gates is worthy of that high distinction. Even the merchant prince of Moscow is ultra-national in political sentiment, and ultra-orthodox in religion. You find him, perhaps, polished and courtly in manner ; shrewd, well-informed, and intelligent in business ; a charming and entertaining companion, well read not only in Russian books but in the literature of other countries ; and a lover of hospitality, which he dispenses with overpowering lavishness. He has a pronounced taste for good cheer, music, and jollity ; probably also for art and science ; and seems to be a man who away from business heartily enjoys existence without taking too grave and deep a view of its duties and burdens.

On a surface view, you might easily mistake him, apart from the clumsy and archaic cut of his winter raiment and the amplitude of his beard, for a favourable specimen of his class as it is found in Western countries. You little suspect how thin often is the crust of modern fashion, and how deep the abyss of obsolete ideas and beliefs that is yawning beneath. He has secretly armed himself with a triple mail of prejudices—prejudices of race, of nationality, and of religion—before trusting himself into the paths of progress ; and guarded by this ancient armour he is safe from any influence that might harm the Russian spirit within. A little friction is enough frequently to reveal most unexpected forms of medieval enthusiasm and fanaticism ; and you are puzzled to tell whether the cultured gentleman who can discuss with you the merits of Wagner's music, or the theories of

Darwin, is not, after all, a "survival" of the Middle Ages. To the typical Moscovite the Emperor is still the "divine figure," ruling by an unquestionable right that it would be sacrilege to deny or oppose. With the same blind fervour he cherishes the national faith, and patriotism and religion have become so bound together in his belief that they are inseparable. It is his boast that the great "heart" of Russia throbs within the walls of his ancient city, and that all truly national movements have their beginning there. As the latest and not least important instance, the agitation that preceded the Russo-Turkish War had its first and most significant displays in Moscow.


If the Moscovite has obsolete faults, it must also be admitted that he has some obsolete virtues. Of hospitality, as has been said, he is a royal dispenser. Within his means nothing is too good to be set before his guest; and there is an old-fashioned heartiness and earnestness in his welcome which is rarely met with in these days, when travelling is universal and hotels ubiquitous. When you can penetrate to his heart of hearts, too, the citizen of Moscow is said to prove a staunch friend, who sticks to you through good and evil réport and all vicissitudes of fortune.

But changes are at work even in the ancient capital of the Czars. The ferment of new ideas has worked into the very centre of old Muscovy. Russia is full of vague aspirations and hopes, half-formed and impracticable theories of social and political perfection, and of the restless, excited, uneasy feeling that precedes the time when "the old order changes, giving place to new." The bonds of the loyalty to the Czar, and to the creed introduced by Cyril and Methodius, seem to be partially

unloosed even in Moscow. Whatever may be the progress of Nihilism and other monstrosities of modern Russian thought, however, it will be long before the visitor who looks about him in Moscow with an understanding eye will fail to discover, still burning brightly in the hearts of the townsfolk, that spirit that led them, when the invader was at their gates, to burn their beautiful city to the ground to save their native land.

CHAPTER VII.

HISTORIC SITES IN GREAT RUSSIA.

N the neighbourhood of Moscow are many interesting historical sites and pretty bits of scenery—pretty at least for Russia, which is not too richly endowed with the beautiful in landscape. Along the banks of the Moskva especially, both above and below the city, there are numerous pleasing views of wood and water, cultivated land and handsome country seats ; and the fleets of barges, boats, and rafts that ply on the stream add animation to the scene without detracting from its pictorial effect. But the two spots in the vicinity of the city that are, perhaps, best worth a visit are associated, not with the industrial enterprise of the old capital, but with the ecclesiastical and religious life of the country, which in every age of Russian history has been intimately mixed up with all the important affairs of state, and with the daily existence of the humblest peasant. One of these is the Voskresenski, or Resurrection Monastery, better known as the “New Jerusalem,” situated about twenty-five miles from Moscow, on the main route to St. Petersburg.

Its founder, the famous Nikon, Patriarch of Moscow, sleeps here, after a busy and stormy life, which had,

perhaps, more influence on the development of the Russo-Greek Church than had that of any of her other children. In the midst of the patriarch's labours for the reform of the ritual and correction of the canonical and liturgical books of the Church, and of his struggles to retain that predominating political power which the patriarchs had obtained under the first Romanoffs, Nikon found time to build on the Istra, a little tributary of the Moskva, a model or exact counterpart of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, copying not merely its shape and dimensions, but the smallest details of its construction and ornamentation, so far as they could be ascertained in his day, and working at the building with his own hands like a common mason. The Istra was rebaptized the Jordan, and a tributary brook the Kedron; a village in the vicinity was named Nazareth; and a chapel marking the spot where the Czar Alexis I. stood at the consecration of the church in 1657, Eleon.

Nikon pushed his pretensions to temporal power too far, and was disgraced and banished to a monastery on the White Lake, in a remote corner of the province of Novgorod. Later he was pardoned, but died before he could resume his schemes of aggrandizement and reform; and his tomb is now shown in the Chapel of Melchizedek, at the foot of "Golgotha," in the monastery which he raised. His reforming zeal also was too ardent, in the view of many of the Russians of his day, lay and cleric. The changes that he introduced in the ancient usages of the Church—especially in "crossing" with three fingers instead of two, the reading of Iēsous (Jesus) with two syllables in place of three, the repetition of the Hallelujah thrice instead of twice in the service, and the

substitution of a cross with two transverse beams where formerly there were three—produced deep and terrible schisms in the Russian Church, which are still unhealed.

These schismatics (*raskolniks*) are not to be confounded with the heretical sects that have also arisen in the bosom of Greek Orthodoxy. Their contention is that they are more orthodox than the Orthodox Church, and alone preserve pure and undefiled from modern corruptions the ancient faith of their fathers. With these Old Believers (*Starovertsi*) the shaving of the beard is still regarded as a mortal sin, and the Czar himself, as following in the footsteps of that arch-fiend and reformer Peter the Great, is looked upon as little better than Antichrist. An extreme type of the *Starovertsi*—real Old Seceders—are the “Priestless People,” the *Bezpopoftschins*, who despise the concession made by their less staunch brethren in accepting priests ordained by established bishops.

The cruelties and persecutions to which the reforming zeal of Alexis and Peter subjected these unhappy schismatics only made them more fanatical and extreme in their resistance. Torture, fine, and imprisonment were imposed as a penalty for wearing a beard; and the leaders of Russian nonconformity were hunted down, knouted, or burned alive. Under these circumstances, the *raskolniks* fled with their faithful prophets and priests to the woods and solitudes, and there founded new communities and spread abroad the Russian race. Villages of them we will meet with in the depths of the forests of the Dwina and Petchora and by the shores of the Arctic Sea, on the southern steppes, in obscure nooks of the Urals, or in remote corners of Siberia. More extreme

varieties there are of Russian schism and heresy—Philipists, Fugitives, Wrestlers with the Spirit, Milk-Drinkers, Scoptsi, and the like—whose eccentricities of practice and belief would take more time to describe than we can spare.

Still more noteworthy than the New Jerusalem Monastery is that of Troitsa, the shrine of the holy St. Sergius, the altar on which was kindled the first flame of Russian patriotism in the dark days of Mongol domination; the bulwark of the nation against usurping pretenders and Polish and Tartar invaders; the refuge of the young Czars Peter and John, when the turbulent Streltsi of Moscow, like the Prætorian bands of Rome, threatened to take the fate of the empire into their keeping; and the quiet retreat where Dionysius, Politzin, Platon, and other learned and pious men, studied and laboured, laying the foundations of a national literature and culture.

The “Trinity” Monastery, or, to give it the full title, the “Crown of Saint Sergius, under the Invocation of the Holy Trinity,” is situated about forty miles from Moscow—a mere stone-throw in Russia—near the line of railway leading north-eastward to Jaroslav on the Volga. It is ranked next in sanctity after the Petschersk Monastery at Kiev, which it far exceeds in richness and historical importance: in these respects, indeed, it has few rivals even beyond the bounds of Russia. Many other monastic establishments, however, are its seniors in age; for it was only in 1337 that the pious Sergius, removing with a few disciples from the abodes of men, built for himself here, in the heart of the forest, near a little stream flowing into the Kliasma, a cell and a small church of wood: and devotees, hearing

of his sanctity, the miraculous cures he wrought, and the beatific visions of the Virgin and holy apostles that were granted to him, began to gather round the lowly hermitage.

A spectacle far different is Troitsa at the present day. It stands on a high situation, overlooking its domain of plain and forest and populous villages for many miles. Walls varying from twenty to fifty feet in height, and three-quarters of a mile in circuit, protected by fosses and flanked by massive and handsome Gothic towers, surround it. Within the convent enclosure are ten churches, with numerous chapels and refectories, an imperial and an archiepiscopal palace, hospital, libraries, a seminary for students, handsome ranges of apartments for the archimandrite, rectors, prefects, and other monastic functionaries, with extensive storehouses, kitchens, and other offices, all solidly built of hewn stone.

The most celebrated church is the Cathedral of the Trinity, within which is the shrine of St. Sergius, weighing nearly one thousand pounds in pure silver. Massive images and ornaments of silver and of gold, adorned with precious stones, surround the shrine, or are grouped in other parts of the church. Here Dimitri Donskoi was blessed and consecrated for the "holy war" against the Tartars; and the convent sent forth along with him two redoubtable champions from among its alumni, who contributed much to the oft-mentioned victory of the Don. Ivan the Terrible, who has left so many grim and fantastic impressions of his sign-manual on the page of Russian history, was baptized in the Trinity Church, and often returned hither with gifts and honours in his hands; for he was a religious fanatic

as well as a man of "blood and iron," and in all his campaigns, even when under the ban of the Church for his crimes, he carried about with him a small chapel consecrated to St. Sergius. The "soul" of Russia may be said to have transported itself to Troitsa when the Poles occupied Moscow. The monastery was besieged for four months, but it was gallantly defended; and then, as on all subsequent occasions, it proved impregnable to a foreign foe. It was through the invocations and reproaches of Dionysius and Politzin that the Russian lords and commons, under Pojarsky and Minin, were stirred up to cast out the invader and choose for themselves a new national head. Under the high altar the young Peter the Great lay hidden when the insurgent Streltsi attacked the place.

The Church of the Assumption, within which are the tombs of the Czar Boris Godunoff, and of Dionysius, the precursor of the Patriarch Nikon in the Russian Church reformation, is also an immense and interesting building; and in its great belfry, rising to a height of nearly three hundred feet, are hung probably the largest chime of bells in the world. The most ponderous of the bells weighs nearly sixty-five tons, and one of the others is nearly half that weight.

The treasures of Troitsa in jewels, plate, sacred relics, church robes and paraphernalia, paintings, sculptures, and ancient books and manuscripts, are scarcely less rich and varied than those of the Kremlin itself, and many of them are the gifts of emperors, empresses, and great nobles. The monastery is said to possess two bushels of pearls, to which Mr. Lansdell would add "an estimated pint of diamonds, to say

nothing of emeralds, rubies, and sapphires innumerable." In palmier days than the present, ere the Empress Catherine II. curtailed its revenues, the monastery had no fewer than one hundred and six thousand serfs attached to it, and its territorial possessions were of prodigious extent. Even yet it is a wealthy and powerful institution; and its rich revenues and broad lands, its high walls binding as in a sheaf its tall spires and towers, its cupolas of gilded copper covering its treasures of gold, silver, and pearl, its memories of miracle and siege, of martyrdom and pageant, make it, perhaps, the most remarkable of the many strange manifestations of the religious feelings of the Russians.

The Troitsa Monastery is on the highway to an interesting part of Muscovy. The valley of the Kliasma, at the head of which it stands, was the centre of Russian history long before Moscow began to be heard of, and the country between that stream and the Volga is scattered over with the remains of renowned cities. Commerce has found for itself more convenient channels. Moscow has drained them of their fame and importance; and now Rostov and Suzdal, Pereslav and Vladimir, are left high and dry, deserted by the crowds of traders that once frequented their streets, and seldom visited even by the wandering tourist.

Rostov, the oldest of these venerable cities, is one whose modern estate is among the most reduced and forlorn. It was a town of the Merians, a Finnish tribe of repute in the days before the Norsemen came to Novgorod to trouble the nations. Sineous, the brother of Ruric, who settled on the White Lake far to the northward, extended his swav over Rostov. No doubt there

were bloody and obstinate battles before the Finns gave way to the Slavs and their Varangian leaders, but the record of these is lost. But Rostov was the first appanage of the Slavs in the Volga countries, and tribute was paid to it by the Emperors of the East early in the tenth century. It was here that Christianity was first preached in these regions, the earliest bishop being a Greek missionary from Byzantium; and in 990 Vladimir the Saint founded at Rostov the Abraham Monastery, which still exists, and granted the surrounding territory to his son, the canonized Boris. It was, however, after the days of Vladimir Monomachus—grandson of Constantine Monomachus, Emperor of the East, father of George the Long-armed, and a famous figure in Russian history, whose cap of fur, surmounted by gems, the cicerone will show you in the Kremlin of Moscow as the oldest of the imperial “crowns”—that Rostov became a separate principality. Then it took its share in the fighting that was constantly going on; was sometimes uppermost, and then again undermost; had its share of sieges and sacks by Tartars, Lithuanians, and brigands; and gradually waning before the rising splendour of Suzdal, Vladimir, and Moscow, fell into insignificance.

Rostov has still a score of churches ancient and modern, a great annual fair, some transport trade, linen and chemical manufactories, and gardens scattered around the little lake, that supply fruits and vegetables for the tables of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Otherwise there is little in the flat marshy plain to attract pilgrims thither. Even its name has been filched from it; and now when Rostov is mentioned, one does not think of the ancient Finnish stronghold, the birth-place of the Christianity of the

Volga, with magnificent churches covering the sacred bones of holy and quarrelsome saints, and the seat for centuries of pious and greedy princes, but of Rostov the vulgar new sea-port town on the Sea of Azov.

Suzdal, which succeeded Rostov in the supremacy of the North-east, is not far off. Its Grand Dukes once exercised for long a really royal sway, extending occasionally over Kiev and Novgorod; but to-day it has dwindled to even smaller dimensions than Rostov. George Dolguruky,—Long-armed George, as his grasping proclivities well entitled him to be called,—was the first independent prince of Suzdal. From here he went forth on his many excursions north, south, east, and west—plundering and humbling Kiev, as we have seen, and carrying off the grand-ducal crown of his father Monomachus from the sunny plains of the Ukraine to these sombre forests; founding Moscow, Pereslav-Zalieski, Jaroslav, Kostroma, Vladimir, and other important cities. It is still worth while to trace the old earthen ramparts and ditches that divided the city into three parts, and glance into the interior of its vast old churches that are the only remains of its former grandeur. In the Assumption Cathedral, in the Kremlin of Suzdal, may be read an inscription that tells how Vladimir came hither in 997 to convert the people and to found this church; and the traveller who has sufficient faith may believe the authenticity of the record.

Vladimir, which is only a stage or two to the south, on the banks of the Kliasma, was probably selected by the later Grand Dukes in preference to their first heritage, both for its more convenient position and its more imposing site. It is now on a main line of railway half

way from Moscow to Nishni-Novgorod, and it is the chief town of the government of the same name, and the seat of an archbishopric. Nevertheless it also has fallen from its former greatness; Moscow and Nishni-Novgorod have between them drained it of trade and influence. For one hundred and seventy years it was the capital of Russia. Even after the seat of sovereignty had been transferred to Moscow in 1328, the Grand Princes up till 1432 came to the Cathedral of Vladimir to be crowned.

The palaces, churches, and humble wooden shanties of old Vladimir spread for a great distance along the hilly banks of the Kliasma; and the Convent of Bogolubof, now seven miles distant, is said to have been once within the walls. Here, as at Moscow, there are a "Bielo-gorod," a "Kitai-gorod," and a "Kremlin;" but the population musters in all only fifteen thousand. Like its successful rival on the Moskva, Vladimir has often been burned down, sometimes by accident, and oftener by the hand of man. The most terrible day in its annals is its capture by Baty Khan in 1238. The Grand Prince George III., founder of Nishni-Novgorod, was absent at the time gathering an army to repel the invaders. The city was captured after four days' fighting, and the inhabitants put to the sword. The princess, with her children, and the clergy and nobles of the place, shut themselves up in the Cathedral of the Assumption; and the Mongols, piling wood around the edifice, burned it to ashes with all its occupants. Catherine II. restored the church in 1774, and later monarchs of Russia have often paid marks of respect to this ancient seat of their race. The Cathedral of St. Dimitri of Solun (partly restored by the Emperor Nicolas) is another

antiquity of Vladimir, and, with its golden gate, is considered one of the finest specimens of the Byzantine style of architecture in Russia.

The prosperity of modern Vladimir mainly depends on its position as a provincial capital. Another famous city, the seat of the neighbouring government of Jaroslav, has preserved its importance by reason of being situated on the main artery of trade. Jaroslav is one of the busiest ports of shipment and transhipment, storage and distribution, of the multifarious commerce of the Volga and its connecting canals; has a rapidly growing population, counting already forty thousand; and has important manufactures of linen, wool, table drapery, hardware, leather, gloves, furs, paper, and chemicals; extensive saw-mills, foundries, and tanneries; and great annual fairs, which help to spread the products of the city's industry over the whole empire. But the townspeople are perhaps prouder of the past distinction of the place than of its present prosperity. Its annals carry us back to the days of the Grand Prince Jaroslav, son of Vladimir the Sainted.

The reader must be tired of hearing the reiterated story of civil broils and Tartar sacks, of which Jaroslav had its share like its neighbours. The great event of its history occurred in the early part of the seventeenth century. It was in this region that the first note of patriotic passion was sounded that was to deliver Russia from the Poles, and the wolfish bands of robbers that were tearing it asunder as if it were a dead carcass. Uglitch, in the same province, some distance farther up the Volga, was the place where occurred the murder of the young Dinitri, the most tragic event

in its effects in Russian history, whereby the last hope of the line of the old Czars was extinguished. Uglitch also yielded the first contingent of Siberian exiles. The usurping Godunoff, having quelled the insurrection that followed on his crime, transported many of the citizens beyond the Urals; and having publicly flogged and broken off the ears of the great town bell that called them to arms, he formally exiled it to Tobolsk, where it still rings church-goers to prayers.

The patriotic Russians of the North-east—after long witnessing their fatherland a prey to Crimean and Cossack hordes, usurpers, pretenders, and brigands, and even "Holy Mother Moscow" herself in the hands of the heretical troops of King Sigismund of Poland—assembled at Jaroslav and Kostroma, and having chosen Prince Dimitri Pojarsky as their leader, marched on to Nishni-Novgorod, followed and cheered for long distances by the populations of whole districts. Then, having been joined by the heroic Minin and the volunteers of Nishni, they pursued their way to Moscow, where the task of clearing the capital of intruders being completed, the assembled nation chose for its head the young Michael Romanoff, scion of a noble family whose estates lay not far from Kostroma.

Among the most promising signs of the present of Jaroslav may be mentioned the Science College, founded and endowed by one of the Demidoffs, that great family of bankers and merchants who have been called the "Rothschilds of Russia." More characteristic of its past are its fourscore churches; perhaps the most interesting being that of the Nativity, where, in Peter the Great's time, St. Demetrius, a great clerical champion of reforms,

sustained arguments and superintended persecutions against sectaries.

Without entering either into the church or into the controversy, we will move down the broad, traffic-laden stream to Kostroma, also the chief town of a Russian government, and with a history and modern occupations that agree pretty generally with those of Jaroslav. If we glance into its curious old Cathedral of the Assumption, we may see the spot where Dimitri of the Don kneeled to give thanks for his safety when the Tartars were wasting Moscow; or if we walk out to the neighbouring Monastery of Ipatief, the rooms may be examined where the six-year-old Michael Romanoff was living with his mother when the representatives of the boyards and people came to offer him the crown of Russia. A monument in a prominent place in the town is in memory of the peasant Ivan Sussanin, whose romantic story has been embalmed in music, drama, and fiction, as furnishing the most heroic type of Russian loyalty. The Poles were in search of the newly-elected monarch. Sussanin offered to conduct an armed band of them to the place where he was concealed, and purposely leading them astray in the dark woods around Kostroma, he died by their hands—thus giving his “life for the Czar,” and helping to end the sorrowful “time of troubles.”

This busy region is indeed the consecrated ground of Russian patriotism; and thus we find, when we descend yet another stage to Nishni-Novgorod, the spectacles of modern industry, and the memories of the period subsequent to the Interregnum, completely blotting out the recollections of the confused old barbaric times ere Muscovy began to struggle out of its isolation.

CHAPTER VIII.

NISHNI-NOVGOROD—RUSSIAN INDUSTRY AND TOWN LIFE.



ANY to whom other Russian names that have been mentioned have been strange, must be familiar with that of Nishni and its great fair, where the East and the West meet once a year to chaffer and to exchange. A guide-book—Murray's excellent publication, for instance—will inform those who consult it that everything interesting about this far-famed commercial city "may be seen in a day;" and though this may be taking an exaggerated view of the tourist's capacity for sight-seeing and powers of endurance, it is the fact that the Great Fair is no longer the extraordinary spectacle that it once was.

That there is any falling away in the actual amount of business done is unlikely. The trade of Nishni is vast and increasing. Its situation, high on the right bank of the Volga, just below its junction with the Oka, is unrivalled as the site of an inland emporium. Not only do all the main channels of river communication—the Volga, the Oka, the Sura, and the Kama—feed it, but the chief routes of traffic and travel to and from Siberia converge upon it. Russian colonization is pressing on and rapidly filling up the country to the

eastward and northward; and in all probability Nishni is only in one of the early stages of its commercial development.

But the old system of conducting trade, especially since the introduction of railways, is undergoing change. Occidental methods are taking the place of those that have been in vogue in Eastern countries from the most remote antiquity. Business can be much more expeditiously and efficiently done by sample and by letter than by buyers and sellers assembling from all quarters of the earth with their goods in their hands. Consequently, though the quantity of commodities exposed may be smaller than in former times, the actual amount of traffic conducted is immensely larger. The smaller centres of trade growing up in Siberia and Turkestan now collect and transmit the produce of these countries; and so strange visitors from Asia, with outlandish faces and garments, and forming a Babel of unknown tongues, no longer form so prominent a feature of the fair as they formerly did. In the arrangements of the fair itself many innovations have been introduced, causing the disappearance of some of the most characteristic and singular of its sights. Picturesqueness has been sacrificed in the interests of cleanliness, and alterations and additions have been made in conformity with modern notions of comfort.

In spite of these changes, the view, seen from one of the elevated spots in the city—the Tower of Minin, for instance—is still an animated and remarkable one in the high-tide of the great annual gathering. Far and wide, meeting the horizon in a line only broken by a mass of forest, a steep river bank, an undulating heave of the

land, or a glittering church spire, stretches the broad plain, mostly under cultivation, and indicating, by the number of hamlets and large villages scattered over it, a population dense for Russia. The broad band of blue stretching across the landscape from north-west to south-east is the noble Volga, and the narrower ribbon that meets it at right angles at your feet is the Oka. Both rivers are crowded with barges, sailing vessels, and steamers ascending and descending. A thick forest of masts stands opposite the wharves of Nishni, and extends far into the Volga. On the triangular space between the two streams are long streets of booths, dingy or brightly painted, with boulevards, lines of restaurants, and places of amusement, and avenues of trees line the river; the new bazaar and governor's residence in the centre; and a swarming population, like bees, moving to and fro in this "city of shops"—the fair itself.

To the southward of this scene is the town of Nishni itself, with the sun gleaming from its brazen cupolas and the white-washed towers of its kremlin, and throwing deep shadows under the low archways and the battlemented walls where the Tartars of Kazan have often fought for entrance. At the present day the Tartars of Nishni are a very useful and peaceable folk. You will see their lithe, active figures busily engaged in the lading and unlading of goods, with the sweat of honest toil on their foreheads; and you are certain, while wending your way to the fair, to be civilly and insinuatingly accosted by one of them who has some little venture of his own strapped on his back or spread out before him.

Arrived on the scene of business, you may direct your steps to the centre of the mart, where, in the lower floor of the governor's house, are displayed manufactured English goods, fancy articles from Paris, toys of Nürnberg, and relics from Palestine, side by side with Persian and Bokharan silks and brocades, jewel-hilted knives and daggers from the Caucasus, ornaments of jade and lapis lazuli from Kashgar, turquoise, malachite, and other stones, spurious and real, cut and uncut, with Russian goods of all varieties. You may thence make your way by a boulevard, lined principally by the shops of silver and gold smiths, and dealers in fur and drapery goods, and in which stand in kindly company the Armenian and Orthodox churches and the Mohammedan mosque, to the "Chinese row" behind, where the principal article exposed is the brick tea imported from the northern parts of the Flowery Kingdom, by way of Kiakhtha, and choicest samples of which are sold at "fancy" prices that would make a British housewife stare. The Russians are excessively fond of tea; but contrary to our method, they drink it without milk, and flavoured with lemon-juice, sucking the fragrant beverage through a piece of lump-sugar held between their teeth.

The Siberian line, which skirts the Volga, is no less worth a visit; for here, along with the products of the great Asiatic territory of Russia—furs and grain, and precious metals and stones—may be seen the miscellaneous stores designed for the Russian colonies and penal and military posts scattered through Siberia as far as the Pacific. Another important department of the fair is that devoted to the sale and purchase of the dried fish which forms

so important an article of Russian diet. It has been an immemorial usage in the houses of the richest in the land, and down through every rank almost to the lowest, to whet the appetite by some tit-bit before the principal meals; and relishes suitable to all classes are purveyed at Nishni-Novgorod—caviare for the aristocratic, and salted cod or the coarser kinds of river fish for the vulgar palate. Or if you drop into one of the numerous restaurants—of which there are specimens suited to the tastes of the different races and classes that frequent the fair—you may profitably spend half an hour in watching the manner in which the people of various nations consume their food. Fill the warehouses, the bazaar, the eating-houses, the khans, the mosques and churches, the streets, the wharves and the shipping with a throng of from one hundred and fifty thousand to two hundred thousand strangers from all quarters, added to the ordinary resident population of forty thousand, not forgetting to make a prominent feature of the throngs of dirty beggars and tramps, greasy and tattered pilgrims and slouching monks, all equally eager to profit by the generosity of the well-to-do, the ignorant, and the pious, and you may gather some idea of the aspect of Nishni in the time of the fair. Other two fairs are held—one on the ice of the Volga, in January, for articles chiefly of wooden manufacture and toys; and the other in July, for horses and cattle—but neither can compare in extent with the great gathering in September.

In the town itself there is a good deal to attract notice. The citizens have not forgotten to honour the patriot who was born in their midst, and in addition to Minin's Tower, the tomb of the gallant butcher and

chief magistrate of Nishni, who cast out the Poles from the Kremlin of Moscow, is pointed to with much pride and reverence in the Cathedral of the Transfiguration, the most ancient of the city churches. Within the kremlin of Nishni also is a monument, erected by the Emperor Alexander I., to Minin and Pojarsky, whose names are as closely and constantly associated in patriotic legend as those of Boris and Gleb are in ecclesiastical myth.

Murom, the famous Russ city which was the headquarters of the last-named sacred personage, may be reached in a day's journey up the Oka, on the right bank of which, and within the province of Vladimir, the decayed old town lies. Chroniclers carry back its history as far as that of Rostov, the capital of Boris; and like that ancient town its population has dwindled in modern times to some ten thousand or twelve thousand. The walls of its kremlin have disappeared, but it is rich in churches, in sacred relics, and in pilgrim shrines; and what in secular eyes is of greater consequence, it still boasts a not inconsiderable trade in grain, flax, linseed, iron manufactures, and timber. Muròm is likely to grow in importance, for it stands in a favourable position between the fertile corn-growing lands south of the Oka and the more northern provinces that are less richly endowed with agricultural wealth. Its mills grind much of the rye meal and flour that feed the industrious artisans, wood-cutters, and fishermen of the five great Russian governments through which we have just glanced—Moscow, Vladimir, Jaroslav, Kostroma, and Nishni-Novgorod.

These provinces are, for the most part, within the zone of pine-forests, which, broadly speaking, the Oka divides from the oak-woods and deep black mould of the districts farther south. They contain vast tracts of fertile country, but a much larger extent of marsh land, forest, and unprofitable sand and heath. On the whole, they do not raise sufficient grain to support the population—some six and a half million, scattered over nearly one hundred thousand square miles. Their true wealth lies in their fine forests of timber trees, their prolific fisheries, their centres of manufacture and commercial business, and, most of all, in the industry and enterprise of their inhabitants. Nowhere, even among the wandering Slavs, is the instinct of roaming more strong, or the practice more common, than in these old provinces in the inmost heart of Russia.

A waggoner or boatman of Vladimir, or a felt-worker of Kostroma, will travel across the Urals as far as the Yenisei, or perhaps even the Lena, and think himself richly compensated if he bring back a few kopeks in his pocket. Troops of young artisans—masons, carpenters, plasterers, blacksmiths, and shoemakers—emigrate from their homes on the Volga to the large centres of population, to St. Petersburg, to Riga, and to Odessa, for the purpose of practising their craft and saving a little money, with which they will return to their native village, purchase a house and a share of the communal lands, and settle down to peasant life. Thousands lead a half-peasant, half-artisan life, performing their share of the labour of village lands in the proper season, and working at their trade for the rest of the year.

The nation is self-sufficing—that is, it strives, and by the aid of prohibitive tariffs strives pretty successfully, to shut out foreign competition, and to manufacture all that it needs for its daily wants. Thus while Russia exports enormous quantities of grain and other raw produce to its customers in other lands, it imports a comparatively small quantity of their commodities in exchange, and a great proportion of these imports consists of articles of luxury demanded by the “educated” tastes of the rich. It loses no doubt more than it gains by this policy; but to supply so enormous a population as is comprised within the limits of the empire, demands an extensive production on Russian soil of all that a Russian requires for food, raiment, travel, and labour. Economically, so far as its own needs are concerned, Russia is a “world apart,” a kind of Japanese Empire in process of slow transition from the operation of irresistible external and internal causes. Many of the manufactured goods may, perhaps, as little bear comparison in finish and quality with the products of British looms and workshops as Tula, the “Russian Birmingham,” and Vyska, the “Russian Sheffield,” can vie with the great English centres of trade; but they quite suit the home market, and meet all the simple requirements of the peasant purchaser. The employers of capital in Russia have as yet been able to lie a good deal on their oars and take things easy; and so there may still be seen in many parts of the country the mines, factories, and mills emptying as the season of seed-time or harvest approaches, and the work-people streaming home by river-boat or post-cart, or more often on their own sturdy legs, to look after their

little holdings, scores or perhaps hundreds of miles away.

It is in this "Russia of the forests" that we have been describing also that another peculiar feature of Russian industrial life is most marked and frequent—namely, the occurrence of villages, or groups of villages, devoted to a particular branch of trade. Each village, each district, and each province has some special occupation, to which often its people are exclusively devoted.

Thus Count Artamof tells us, in his work on Russia, that if the district of Nerehta, in Kostroma, is celebrated for its axes, Chuiysk is not less noted for its calicoes and its nankins, and its women are regarded as the best spinners in the empire. The cutting and transport of firewood, and the preparation of tar and carbon, occupy the natives of Pochehonn in Jaroslav; and the people of Lubimetz are keepers of restaurants and cheap eating-houses. The province of Jaroslav, indeed, supplies the waiters of the lower class to the large towns of the empire; while the Tartars of Kasimov on the Oka, famous for their sobriety and honesty, are employed in the best hotels of Moscow and St. Petersburg. The district of Miychino furnishes excellent saddlers, harness-makers, and potters; and Rybinsk is known for its pilots, joiners, and carpenters. Horsebreakers come mostly from the banks of the Mologa; and no place in Russia can compete with Uglitch for hams, or with Romanov for sheepskin coats. The market-gardeners of Rostov, as has already been mentioned, carry their onions and cabbages, their cherries and apples, etc., to the old and new capitals of Russia; and those of Danilov are close competitors with their fruits and vegetables.

No housewife is satisfied unless her board is spread with linen from the looms of Velikoi-Selo or Viskovo.

Mr. Mackenzie Wallace informs us that "in the province of Vladimir a large group of villages live by icon-painting; in one locality, near Nishni, nineteen villages are occupied in the manufacture of axes. Round about Paulovo, in the same province, eighty villages produce nothing but cutlery; and in a locality named Ouloma, on the borders of Tver, no less than two hundred villages live by nail-making."

South of the Oka river, between it and the country of the Don Cossacks, and extending from the basin of the Dnieper on the west to the banks of the Volga on the east, is a "huge cantle" of Russia, comprehending no fewer than ten governments—Kaluga, Orel, Tula, Riazan, Tambov, Kursk, Voronej, Penza, Simbirsk, and Saratov—that present numerous points of contrast, becoming more marked as we move southward and eastward, to the countries we have just passed over.

Shifting away from the centre of the empire, the historic mould becomes more shallow; we can skim the surface at greater speed. Ancient cities with chronicles reaching back to the days of the introduction of Christianity, and even towns that can carry their history back to the more recent times of the Grand Princes or the domination of the Golden Horde, become more rare. Some towns of old date may be pointed to. Riazan and Kaluga, Elets, Kursk, and Voronej were Russian settlements before the coming of Baty Khan; Tula and Orel played important parts in the civil struggles at the close of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries.

But Penza and Simbirsk, Tambov and Saratov, and the vast majority of the other centres of population, are the creations of the times of the Romanoffs, many of them, indeed, of the last fifty years. These provinces are lands recovered from the flood of Tartar immigration. Their settlement belongs to the more recent period of Russ colonization; and the process is not by any means complete.

Along the eastern skirts of this immense region—which is nearly as large in area as France, and with a population of between fourteen and fifteen millions of souls—the inhabitants are still scantily sprinkled, and there is ample room for development. Bran-new towns are springing up, much as we find them doing in Minnesota or Kansas, in districts teeming with agricultural riches, and whose great disadvantages are the fewness of the hands for turning the furrow and reaping the crop, and the great distances that separate them from a market. Even in the provinces nearer to Moscow and Kiev, though the country is often more densely populated than in the oldest parts of the empire, the land is capable of supporting a much larger number of inhabitants than it does at present; for this is the “granary of Russia”—a storehouse from whose abundance a great part of Europe and of Russia itself is fed. The conditions of soil, climate, exposure, and products differ in each of these provinces, as may easily be imagined, from the great extent of surface that they cover. But they resemble each other in this, that their population is almost exclusively devoted to agricultural work, and that they raise a large quantity of grain and other farm produce in excess of their own wants.

In the northern parts of Riazan and Tula there are still masses of pine forest and bare expanses of swamp and sand; farther south, fine woods of oak, maple, beech, and elm, with wide clearings between, are prominent features of the landscape. Beyond these, the woods dwindle down to copses, or straggle away into lines bordering the river-courses. A rich, smiling, open country, with little hills and ridges tufted with trees planted round the walls of some convent or country-house, with hollows full of white hazels and wild cherry, apple, and pear trees, and broad cultivated plains, and cheerful-looking, white-washed village houses clustered round the church—such are characteristic features of the fertile “Black Lands” of Orel, Tambov, and Penza, and of Kursk and Voronej, bordering on the pastoral steppes of the Ukraine and the Don Cossack country. By the margin of the Volga, in Saratov and Simbirsk, wide, bare, sandy plains alternate with fine forests, deep, rich, loam lands, bearing splendid crops of wheat and maize, or patches where the painstaking German colonists rear the tobacco plant, the vine, and the water-melon.

We meet with a great variety in the races and religions as well as in the scenery of this region, and these increase the nearer we approach the Volga. Of the Finnish tribe of the Mordvins there are three hundred thousand established in the provinces of Penza, Saratov, and Simbirsk; and the last-named province contains nearly one hundred thousand of the cognate people, the Tchuvashes. Side by side with these are Tartars, forming little communities apart, each with its mollah and its village mosque. The Finnish peoples, nominally Christians, still follow many of the sacrificial and other

religious practices of their pagan ancestry, offering horses, horned cattle, sheep, and fowls to their tutelary deities, and propitiating them with oblations of bread, beer, and vodka, and assembling in "sacred places" in the woods for these superstitious observances, of which the ecclesiastical authorities know not, or knowing, wink at.

Then the Teutonic colonies remain, as has already been noted, as German in tongue, manners, and religion to-day as they were when their countrywoman the great Empress Catherine planted them on the Volga to be light to the Russian peasantry around them. The Russians have learned nothing; and their Lutheran neighbours have forgot nothing.

But the great cause of ecclesiastical strife and heart-burning in these countries is not the alien creeds of these alien peoples, but dissent in the bosom of the Orthodox Church itself. To the mind of the ordinary moujik, it appears the most natural thing in the world that the Finlander should be a Protestant, the Pole a Roman Catholic, and the Tartar a zealous follower of Mohammed; but it is to him a thing incomprehensible that one of his own race should be of a faith different from that of his fathers and all his kin. His religion is as much a matter of inheritance as his blood and his name, and it would be a kind of sacrilege to doubt and blasphemy to deny the faith handed down from the fathers.

But, as is inevitable among a peasantry on whom religious feelings, uncorrected by knowledge and reflection, have so powerful a hold; who have intense, unbounded faith in the miraculous virtues of penances, pilgrimages, fasting, the touch of holy relics, and

consecrated bread; who pay a devotion to the outward form not less profound than to the spirit, and whose memories are stored with the superstitious beliefs of their ancestors in malignant spectres, fairy people, and mysterious beings of the wood and the marsh,—there are within the Russo-Greek Church divisions and subdivisions of doctrine and observance innumerable. Like the stars, these seem to “increase with gazing.” Some of them reach back to the earliest discussions in the Christian Church; others, including the most important of all—the sect of the Old Believers, of whom we have spoken—to the times of official reform and persecution inaugurated by the Patriarch Nikon and the Czar Alexis; while some of the most strange and extreme forms are the product of modern religious and political impulses. It is said, though no official statistics can be got to bear out a fact so unpleasant, that if a religious census of Penza, Tambov, and the neighbouring provinces were taken, there would be found to be at least as many Old Believers, clinging to the ancient forms and tenets, and abhorring innovation as the special work of the Evil One, as members of the recognized Church.

A great part of this region south of the Oka formed part of the old principality of Riazan, the last and most formidable of the rivals of Moscow in the basin of the Volga. The Princes of Riazan contended with the Lords of the city on the Moskva for the favours of the Great Khan, and fought with them in the field. Tula belonged to them, and their territory extended to the neighbourhood of the Dnieper on the west; while Voronej, far down the Don valley, was one of their possessions. It was not till 1521, in the time of Vassili, son of the

“Great,” and father of the “Terrible” Ivan, that this magnificent land, whose rich harvests “looked like waving forests,” was added to the possessions of the Grand Dukes of Muscovy. The last Russ republic, Pskov, had fallen ten years earlier; and Novgorod Severski, the last princely appanage, fell two years later, and thenceforth, as M. Rambaud says, “there was only one Russia” who could now turn her united arms against her foreign enemies the Tartars and the Poles.

The town of Riazan itself is on the south bank of the Oka, some distance above Murom (to which it was originally subject), and about one hundred and twenty miles from Moscow. The old city of the same name was obliterated during a Tartar incursion, and its remains are to be seen thirty miles from the present Riazan. The latter was first known as Pereslav-Riazanski, a contemporary town with Pereslav-Zalieski, in Vladimir, and both named after the still more ancient Pereiaslav on the Dnieper near Kiev. The two little streams that fall into the Oka here are the Lybed and the Trubej, so called by the original emigrants after the brooks that flow through the old Pereiaslav, just as Anglo-Saxon colonists bestowed the familiar names of the old country on their new homes—as, for example, you will find a “London, on the Thames, County Middlesex,” in Upper Canada.

Pereslav, on the Oka, rose to fortune on the ruins of Old Riazan, and appropriated its very name. Even the odour of sanctity that clung to the walls that the Tartars battered down has been transferred hither. The imperishable body of St. Basil, first bishop of Murom, made a miraculous voyage up the Oka on a

mantle, bearing in its arms a wonder-working image of the Virgin, and rested a while at Old Riazan. Then as the infidels would not leave the canonized corpse in peace, it continued its marvellous voyage up-stream; and bones and image now attract thousands of worshippers to the Cathedral of the Assumption in New Riazan, one of the vastest religious edifices in Russia. Great store of treasure and curiosities, including a cup, gilt with the gold signet of Baty Khan, the dust of warrior-princes and sainted bishops and laymen, armour and chalices, quaintly painted altar-screens and icons, enrich the interior of this and the other churches of Riazan. The episcopal palace was once the seat of the powerful sovereigns of the principality; and the old defences of the city and kremlin can still be traced. In the town and neighbourhood there are numerous monasteries of great extent and sanctity, as indeed we find to be the case wherever a few thousand Russians are gathered together; and like all the other provincial centres in this rich agricultural region, Riazan has its stated cattle fairs and important grain markets, the resort of throngs of sturdy, well-to-do peasantry from the surrounding district, and of corn-dealers, shippers, millers, distillers, hide and tallow merchants, horse-rearers, butchers, and others from distant quarters where nature has not been so lavish in her bounties.

Riazan's next neighbour, Tula, on the other hand, is more than any other town in Russia a place of manufacture. Its pre-eminence in this respect is not a thing of yesterday. For about three hundred years, since the epoch when iron ore was discovered in the neighbourhood, it has resounded with the clang of the hammer and

the whirl of the loom, and its people have been celebrated for their skill as gunsmiths and cutlers. Peter the Great brought artificers from Western Europe to teach the workmen of Tula the most improved methods of constructing gun barrels, locks, and flints, the casting of cannon, and the fabricating of swords and pikes. On his way back to Moscow, after his first unsuccessful expedition against Azov, Peter halted several days at Tula, and in the new ironworks, built by the Dane, Marselis, "amused himself by hammering three large iron sheets with his own hands,—every hammer blow," as Mr. Schuyler says in his *Life of the Great Czar*, "driving away a regret and fixing a resolution."

Ever since, it has been the armoury of Russia, and at the present day the great bulk of its population are engaged in the imperial arms factories and other establishments for the manufacture of rifles, hardware, and cutlery, while it is also noted for its production of samovars, the brazen apparatus for preparing tea which every Russian carries with him on a journey. A great impetus has been given to its trade in recent years by the discovery of coal deposits in the neighbourhood; and Tula, with its smoky stalks and ranges of many-windowed brick factories, looks more like a busy, grimy town transported from Yorkshire or Lancashire, than a stiff and starched provincial capital in Great Russia.

In the streets of modern Tula, where every sight and sound is an evidence of the sweat and struggle of industry, it is not easy to recall the times when the inhabitants crowded terror-stricken behind the ramparts at the rumour of the approach of devastating

hosts of Crim Tartars or Turks, or to believe that it was at one period infamous as a resort of lawless desperadoes. It was at Tula that Otrepief, the first and ablest "false Dimitri," gathered a following about him; and the city was for a time his capital, where he received ambassadors, and took possession of the royal robes and treasures brought from Moscow. Again and again the turbulent townsmen rose under new leaders, and the place was besieged, sacked, and burned by pretenders and usurpers, patriots and Poles, till at length, abandoning the old site, they began a career for their city on a new footing, having learned to some purpose the lesson that there was more profit in peaceful pursuits than in civil broils.

Kaluga is another town which has been compelled by misfortune to shift its site and its ways; but probably the visitor and the reader will not care to undergo the tedium of spending much time in hunting up the *souvenirs* of its past within the white-washed walls of its cathedrals and convents that overlook the lazy Oka, and will be content also with a flying glance at the small town of Malo-Jaroslavetz (Little Jaroslav) not far off, where the conqueror of Europe, the lawgiver to kings, the great captain of his age, drank the cup of humiliation to the dregs.

Napoleon, leaving Moscow smouldering behind him, and finding winter fast approaching, endeavoured first to gain Kaluga, whence the way would have been open for his army into a richer and more genial region, which had not been swept clear of supplies by the passage of two enormous armies. At Malo-Jaroslavetz he suffered the first defeat in the retreat; and perceiving, as

no eye could better do, the unassailable position of the Russians, he gave way to despair, and retiring, says Segur, to the cottage of a weaver, "an old, crazy, filthy wooden hut," and to a dirty dark room divided into two parts by a ragged cloth, the master of the Tuileries fell into a state of stupor from which none of his generals could rouse him. Next morning the army turned their backs on the bright gleam in the southern sky, and their faces towards Smolensk and the chill and surly north, and resumed their ever-memorable retreat.

Kursk and Voronej, outposts of yore against Tartar inroads, and to-day thriving towns, embosomed in orchards, the centre of busy agricultural operations, and predominating wide reaches of rich grassy steppe lands, might claim some notice. The former was the scene of heroic struggles between Polovtsis and Kievans, Cossacks and Nogais; and the latter the station where Peter the Great built his flotilla—"the first Russian fleet of war," if we except the model frigates the Czar had previously built and exercised on the lake of Pereslav-Zalieski—with which he wrested Azov from the Turks. Voronej is notable also as the birth-place of the peasant poet Nikitin, and other bards and leaders of the people, and as the designated seat of a "new Russian" university. But apart from these, few of the places we meet with in traversing the "Granary of Russia" possess any attractions beyond the very modest share of them common to the country towns of the Empire of the Czar.

Like other things constructed for use rather than show, these towns of Great Russia are eminently unpicturesque. A few wide, ill-paved streets at right

angles to each other, and united by a maze of narrow crooked lanes not paved at all; blinding dust in dry weather, and mire mid-leg deep after rain; at all seasons, except, perhaps, during keen frost, pervaded by "a rank compound of villanous smells," among which a discriminating nose might detect greater variety of evil odours than is attributed to Cologne; droves of cattle and horses from the Don country and the Ukraine, guarded by ragged Tartar and Cossack drivers; heavy-booted moujiks enveloped in greasy sheep-skin coats bringing in loads of grain, hay, roots, and vegetables for sale; spruce citizens, with their wives and daughters often fashionably or at least gaily dressed, stepping cautiously along the dilapidated pavement, and past the refuse of tanneries, distilleries, and tallow and soap works, profoundly unconscious that there is anything to offend the eye or nose or impair the pleasure of their afternoon promenade;—these delights may be promised to the enterprising traveller who undertakes the exploration of a typical Russian town. They are not of a kind fitted to stimulate the fancy; the novelty soon wears off. If you glance at the houses that line the principal streets, you may find not a few that have a striking and even handsome and tasteful appearance. The structure of even the loftiest church and most spacious town hall may be of timber; but white-wash and paint have been laid on with a liberal hand. Only in spots where the hot sun and the biting frost have combined to tear away its disguises will the humble material of the building be disclosed.

Where, following the fashion of the French, who in Russia at least are regarded as in the van of civil-

ization, trees are planted to form a boulevard, or orchards and gardens intervene between blocks of building, a bright and gay effect is produced by the contrast of vivid colours. These edifices, you will find, have been built with ambitious aims, and are of ample proportions. Few towns of any pretension are without their advanced seminaries for males and females, their military and ecclesiastical training schools, their library and museum, their literary and scientific assemblies, their musical and artistic coteries, often their small theatre and opera house. Too frequently, however, these admirable institutions have been provided to meet wants that have yet to be created. The gymnasia are sometimes almost as numerous as the scholars; the university is thought flourishing that can count half-a-dozen students for each member of its professorial staff.

Intelligent Russians complain that the fruits of these trees of knowledge are not so fair as had been expected—that the universities breed only pedants and revolutionaries. But that may be the fault, not of the knowledge taught, or even of the method of teaching it, but of the system that has set the machinery to work. The official mind deems it necessary that such and such a town should be supplied with the means of higher class education or of culture in art and science. In Russia the state lays upon itself the burden of taking the initiative in these matters. A paternal government acts and speaks and even thinks for its children, thus saving them a vast deal of trouble. All the opinions, political and religious, that are held to be safe are tied up in red tape, and laid away in pigeon-holes. There is no scope in wide Russia for individual thought, or for speech and action following upon it. All

whose views do not conform to the official model are held to be suspect and dangerous. It is not strange that the attempt to guide philosophy, art, and science on these hard and fast lines should have ended in failure, or in eccentricities that in the eyes of the originators of the system are worse than failures, and that Russia should be strewn with more wrecks of abortive schemes of modern improvement than with ruins caused by war and revolution.

As a rule, there is little original tendency towards culture in Russian urban society. The higher or official class—a military caste that will not deign to mingle with those beneath—are concerned with their own scandals, intrigues, and minute jealousies. Their spare hours are devoted to card-playing, in which an extraordinary amount of time is spent in Russia, to balls and evening parties, to church exercises if the cast of mind is religious, or to French novels if the taste is literary.

The merchant is wholly taken up with the affairs of his business and his guild. If he is rich, he gives magnificent entertainments, at which figure champagne, Dresden china, grand pianos, and costly foreign dishes, together with nobles, officers of rank, and artistic and literary celebrities, if these rarities are procurable. But his motive is ostentation, with perhaps a dash of that real desire to be hospitable which is seldom absent in a Russian; and as for the official guests, Mr. Mackenzie Wallace tells us that it is perfectly well understood that their presence implies no intimacy or invitation in return, and it is even hinted that a high military magnate will not disdain to accept a handsome present in return for the honour of his appearing as a “table decoration” at

the board of a rich merchant. But when the feast is over and the guests are gone, the host returns to his primitive old Russ mode of life, differing little, save in abundance and variety of his food and superior quality of his clothes, from that of his work-people and dependants. The luxuries and refinements of modern society afford him no pleasure or amusement; they serve only as a means of displaying his wealth and importance.

As for the ordinary artisans and burghers—the rank and file of the town population—most of them have hitherto found their time more than sufficiently taken up with the struggle to provide for their daily wants in food and raiment. The possibility of their having ideas and opinions of their own, of being capable of forming dangerous combinations and discussing the sources and the objects of national power, was hardly dreamed of by the bureaucracy which dictated the laws. Great political and economic movements—war, emancipation, the development of trade, the spread of education, the propagation of revolutionary ideas—have been long working like a strong ferment below the seemingly rigid forms of Russian society. If the government have failed to teach the people many things, they have thoroughly taught them the lesson to plot and to conceal. Socialist theories, under various disguises, especially that negation of all religious belief and denial of the individual right in property known as Nihilism, have spread, by some law of contraries, with amazing swiftness and secrecy through all ranks of a society heretofore distinguished for the blind intensity of its faith and its deep reverence for the traditions of the past.

The people are becoming infected by a suspicion that their temporal and spiritual guides have been misleading them—that their blood has been spilt, their hard-won money wrung from them, and their penances, prayers, and alms exacted, only to bind faster the bandages with which their masters seek to control their limbs and cover their eyes. The artisan class of the towns are always more exposed to outer influences than their brethren in the country, and these ideas have made most rapid progress among the work-people of the industrial centres. But no class of society seems free of the taint of disaffection. The army and the clergy, the nobles and the peasantry, the women more audaciously than the men, even officers of the imperial household and members of the body-guard of the Czar, have been shown, or at least have been suspected, to have taken part in the desperate and determined conspiracies against the life of the sovereign and the order of Russian society.

Under the whited surface painted by officialism, strange and secret processes—change and monitions of change—are going on which officialism itself cannot reveal, and the tendency of which the plotters themselves cannot estimate. It is no longer in the towns that we now look in vain for that immobile Russia of the Middle Ages that so long existed side by side with modern Europe. Even in the country villages, where the Russian life pure and simple may still be studied, we cannot be certain how far a society, apparently so dull and stolid on the surface, is mined and ready for a revolutionary explosion.

CHAPTER IX.

PEASANT LIFE IN GREAT RUSSIA.



TO find a village of the primitive Russian type—such as may be counted by the thousand within the limits of Great Russia, between the White Sea and the southern steppes, and from the old Lithuanian frontier to beyond the Ural Mountains—the best plan is to leave the beaten routes of travellers, where railways and steamers, and all the influences they bring in their wake, have modified patriarchal manners and disturbed the sleepy calm of the hamlet. It will even be necessary to abandon the lines of broad *chaussées*—some of them as fine specimens of road-making as are to be found in Europe—which have been constructed at great cost between the larger towns; and, getting as far away as possible from these beaten tracks, to plunge into the depths of the blank spaces, often as large as English counties, that, as shown in the maps, intervene between them. To reach your destination, it will be necessary to resort to means of conveyance peculiar to Russia, and to undergo the dire experiences of what in that realm is called a country road.

Having obtained your *podorojna*, or order for

horses,—nothing in Russia can be done without an official permit,—you will probably find at your disposal three or four instruments of torture: a *telega*, or springless cart; another cart, furnished with a hood, and called a *kibitka*; and a *tarantass*, a lighter vehicle mounted on poles, and furnished with the *donga*, or arched bow over the horses' heads, which figures so prominently in Russian equipages.

Few are carried so far by their curiosity as to explore these solitudes in the depth of winter; but by choosing that season, they will at least avoid the terrible ruts and holes and the unfathomable abysses of mud through which they must plunge and jolt when the track has been softened by rain. If the journey be long—and most journeys are long in the dominions of the Czar—changes of horses will be necessary, and provision has been made for this from time immemorial by the establishment of posting-stations along the route.

A sense of melancholy and loneliness is perhaps the feeling that is uppermost in the breast of the stranger as he approaches a secluded hamlet in Great Russia. These small rural communities have a character and an organization peculiar to themselves. Glancing along the single street, and peeping in at the rude doorways, you detect something of the temperament and the destinies of the people, and of the outward circumstances that have moulded their present condition. You look in vain for the fragile cottages of the Ukraine, with their shade of beech and cherry trees, their flower-plots, and their climbing vine or honeysuckle by the porch.

The houses are solidly built of great rough-hewn logs, with roofs of scarcely less substantial structure, pitched

high in order to throw off the winter load of snow. On the doorway and windows little art has been expended ; but, in the north especially, the end ridges of the roof, the rain-gutters, and balconies are often curiously painted, carved, and fretted. Instead of being scattered about in "admired disorder," like the huts of the peasants of Kiev or Poltava, where each house seeks to assert, by its attitude and situation, its individuality and its independence of the other, the dwellings in the villages of Great Russia stand as rigidly in line as their clumsy and loutish shapes will allow—like a Falstaffian regiment of Bullcalfs and Mouldys on parade. The houses, whether their number is ten or a hundred, are ranged on each side of the village street, and few of them straggle from the ranks. The thoroughfare itself is probably knee-deep in mire, and choked with filth unutterable, which it is no one's business to remove. It is the favourite wallowing-place of the pigs of the community and the playground of the village urchins. Poultry and lean mongrel curs are continually exploring it in search of garbage ; and the feet of the cattle and horses, and the wheels of the rude waggons, stir up anew its unsavoury depths. The dwellings stand apart from each other, each with its own surroundings of cart-shed, byres, and other outhouses. The villager will, if possible, have his cabbage-plot, and in a favourable situation for fruit there will be orchards, but, as a rule, little or no space is spared for such useless and thriftless productions as flowers. While in Little Russia the eye may range over open and smiling sky and plain, in Great Russia, except in the extreme south, the forest is never far distant, and the heavens are

seldom long clear of cloud or of fog. On one side at least, and often on all four sides, the dark wall of the woods bounds the view, and seems to throw its shadow over the village life. From the first flurry of October snow until the hasty arrival of the belated spring six months of wintry weather may be counted upon. Often the storms are so heavy and prolonged that the village is buried to the eaves of the houses, or even deeper, under the snow, and cut off for a season from all intercourse with its neighbours.

But at the best of times, when the roads are hardest and harvests most plentiful, the influences of the world without have difficulty in penetrating into these secluded hamlets. The village elder, or some other representative of the commune perhaps, carries the surplus grain or other produce of the village lands to the great fair held in the nearest market town, and returns with a modest supply of foreign luxuries—the necessities of life are grown or woven at home—and with news of the court or the camp, of the latest miracle or victory; and then the village falls asleep again for a few weeks. They live a narrow and restricted life in the midst of almost illimitable spaces. The commune and its affairs are their universe; the village elder is their Great Power; the village council the repository of political wisdom, and the village pope or priest of spiritual grace. Czar and Metropolitan, Councils of State and Holy Synods, the tramp of armies and the march of modern progress, are things remote, undefined, incomprehensible—to be viewed with awe and accepted by faith, like other unseen mysteries, but, like these, incapable of being conceived by the simple peasant mind.

Such, until recently, has apparently been the mental attitude of the Russian villager; but even in his slow ears, as has been hinted, tidings of strange disturbing import have been whispered. He has heard—birds of the air have carried the matter—that he is far in the rear of the race, when he might be in the van; that the other nations claiming to be civilized have asserted and secured their rights; that the State has other duties towards him than to exact the communal taxes and sweep away a proportion of the village youth into the ranks of the army; that serf emancipation is but the prologue to other reforms; and that it is time to bear himself like a man and claim his just rights.

In the organization of the Russian village, there is something that prepares the mind for democratic if not for socialistic ideas. Each little rural community in Great Russia—the stronghold of autocracy and centralization—is in one sense an independent republic. When these lands were first settled, the immigrants had to camp, and clear the soil, in the midst of enemies. They clubbed together to cut down the forests and to defend their hearths and fields; co-operation was equally necessary to hunt down the bears and wolves, and clear away the snow-wreaths after the storms of winter. Men could not live apart in detached farms and crofts as in modern England; and the Russian is a social creature and pines for the presence of his fellows. The land itself was to be had for the occupying; the difficulty, until comparatively recent times, was to persuade or compel the peasant to reside on it.

And so arose the communal rights and authority,

established by indefeasible and unwritten law, under which twenty-five millions of Russian subjects hold their property. Each house in a village belongs to the head of the family occupying it. The land that the inmates till, however, is the property, not of themselves, but of the community of which the family forms a unit. It is periodically redistributed by lot, under the direction of the elder and the *mir*—the village council or "world," balloted for by the inhabitants "in public meeting assembled."

A member of the commune cannot free himself of his duties by neglecting them. He must work for the common good; and his laziness, waste, or intemperance is a public matter, which his *mir* takes care to look after. He cannot, without its consent, abandon his family and his lot in the little "world" and go out into the great world in search of fortune and freedom. Even if he is allowed to settle for a time as a trader or a workman in one of the large towns, he is often not relieved of the burden of his duties, and is even liable to be recalled and punished for real or trumped-up offences against the village commonwealth. For the *mir*, by immemorial usage, rather than by express written law, possesses extensive plenary powers over its subjects. It may eject them summarily from the community, and from all right in house and land, and turn them adrift into space; and it may, at least it does, punish them, not only by fine but by corporal chastisement. The representatives of a certain number of village communes—perhaps as many as a hundred—form the *volost*, or district authority; and the *zemstvo*, or provincial assembly, has been vested with new powers of local self-government and jurisdiction.

Emancipation, which has changed in so many ways the very foundations on which Russia's prosperity rests, has but strengthened and enlarged the communal system and extended its application into new fields. Not only was freedom given by a stroke of the pen to the bulk of the population of Great Russia, but the agricultural serfs were put in the way of becoming the communal owners of the lands they formerly tilled for the state and for the nobles; and from the house of bondage they were suddenly raised to the dignity, so much desired in some other lands, of being peasant-proprietors. As to the immediate effects of emancipation on the condition of the Russian peasants, and on the revenues of the Russian gentry, there are wide differences of opinion.

As might be expected from the great variety of soil, climate, and systems of agriculture, the benefits and the disadvantages of the change have been felt in very different proportions in different parts of the country. Thus in the provinces north of the Oka, where the climate is harsh and the soil so poor as hardly to repay the cultivator by means of "high-farming," emancipation has virtually only transferred the peasants from the rule of the nobles to that of the commune. The dues payable to their former lords and masters exceed often the rent value of the village lands; while the old proprietors themselves, deprived of part of their lands, and unable from want of labour to profitably work the rest, have abandoned their country seats and sought commercial pursuits or official employment in the towns.

In the "Black Earth" region, on the other hand, where

the climate is more genial, and the land fertile and capable of supporting a much larger population than at present, the serf-proprietors have generally benefited largely, even in pocket, by the social revolution from which some of them boded overwhelming ruin; while the peasantry are in a position that demands only industry and sobriety to make them comfortable if not affluent. In the one instance the possession of the land is felt to be a burden, and in the other it is a privilege; but under the best circumstances, the strict ties that bind the villagers within the limits of their petty world, and prevent them from seeking their fortunes elsewhere, or exercising their individual will in the smallest matter outside their own threshold, grow more and more galling. In the long run, the substitution of free for serf labour must prove a blessing to the country—indeed, for good or evil the change could scarcely have been longer delayed—and the late Emperor Alexander II. deserves great credit for the bold and energetic manner in which he grappled with, and so far solved, a vast problem.

Beyond the arable land adjoining the villages are to be found the pasturages where the cattle of the commune are turned out to feed; and probably the woodland and peat-moss to which each household resorts for fuel and building material. Most of the old enemies against whom the original settlers joined their forces—Tartar raiders, Cossack foragers, brigands, “broken men,” and all the loose conflicting elements of society in a state of disintegration—have passed away before the inexorable march of civilization and industry.

The wolves, however, remain, though in greatly reduced numbers. Packs of them haunt the forests, especially in

the more northern provinces; and after deep snow and long-protracted frosts, hunger emboldens them to prowl even into the village streets by night in search of prey. A belated wanderer, especially if he is old and feeble or fatigued by the march, would stand a poor chance of escaping their fangs; and in the more remote districts, even the traveller who has a couple or more of good horses harnessed to his sleigh may taste the dangerous excitement, made so familiar to us by tale and legend, of being pursued by the wolves. When the cattle and sheep have been safely housed, their fierce and wily enemy, coming "like a thief in the night," has been known to climb upon the top of the shed, scratch away the protecting snow, remove the covering of boards with his powerful teeth, and leaping down among the helpless beasts, destroy in one debauch of blood the unlucky peasant's whole stock. Then is the time for the outraged owner and his neighbours to turn out in force against the common foe. An ingenious method is sometimes adopted for making a large "bag" of wolves. A worn-out old horse is harnessed to a lumbering cart, that plods heavily through the snow, as if inviting an attack from the hungry prowlers that eye it from the shelter of the wood, and gradually draw nearer in the confident hope of obtaining an easy prey. But concealed in the cart are the best shots of the village, and when the pack gather together close at hand for their final rush, a volley into the midst of them sends them scampering back to the thicket—all save the leaders, whom the keen eyes of the marksmen have singled out, and who are left dead on the track.

One of the great occasions of rejoicing in the

village—fasts and “name-days” or saints’ days are of weekly and at some seasons almost daily occurrence—is the marriage of a young couple belonging to the community. Marriage in Russia is a specially solemn sacrament and consecration, attended by minute and protracted religious observances, and visits of ceremony between the two families that are to be united. It is also a matter that personally affects the whole of the commune.

In former times numerous families dwelt under one roof, and one male head represented them in the community and wielded an unquestioned authority within his own household. But this patriarchal system, though still existing to a great extent, is fast breaking up, and every married couple now seek to set up an independent family of their own, and have their proportion of the village land duly allotted to them. The young moujik who has thoughts of setting up in life by no means has his choice restricted to the maidens of his native place. Though the nearest hamlet may be many versts away, lonely moor and gloomy forest are not sufficient to keep the young people of the neighbouring villages from coming into contact, and the elders rather encourage the practice of going beyond the bounds of the “mir” for a wife. The marriage will naturally take place in the winter time, when the harvest has been got in and all the work of the field stopped.

When all the nuptial ceremonies are over — when Dimitri Sergievitch has been crowned as “king” and “head” of Natalie Ivanovna, and Natalie, in her turn, has been solemnly consecrated as the “queen” of

Dimitri's home and affections—the guests, whose religious feelings have hitherto been kept in high tension, relax, and begin with all their might to eat, drink, and be merry. The fun, to a super-refined or even moderately fastidious taste, may be coarse and uproarious; and the quantities of vodka drunk may be larger than is good for the understandings of the wassailers. But in what country does not such excess occasionally occur? and are we in these islands justified in flinging the first stone at the Russian moujik, who has so few pleasures in this life, for not rejoicing with moderation? The drinking propensities of the Russian peasants certainly do not form a specially attractive feature of the national customs; and few affairs of consequence—religious, political, or even judicial—can be transacted without the aid of strong spirits. But it has often been questioned whether the examples of extreme insobriety that may be seen in most Russian towns and villages—and more frequently, it is alleged, in these post-emancipation days—may not be traced as much to the weak stomachs and excitable temperaments of the poorly-fed peasantry as to the potency or quantity of the liquor consumed.

The feasting over, and the jokes cracked, the marriage guests escort the newly-married pair to their home, the horses scampering, *ventre-à-terre*, over the powdery snow, and the shouts and snatches of choruses of the excited drivers vibrating in the keen air.

It is under such exhilarating circumstances that we prefer to glance at the life of the Russian peasant. To perceive that his ordinary lot is a hard and laborious one, you have only to look at his coarse and rude garments, his toil-worn figure, his roughly-built hut;

or to thoroughly satisfy yourself on the subject, step carefully across the mud puddle before his lowly door and enter the sanctuary of his home. The Russian home is a sanctuary in a literal sense, for it has its family shrine and its household gods. The sacred icons and relics, and pictures and figures of Virgin and saint, are the prominent and often the only ornament of the family room ; a portrait of the Czar sometimes disputing the place of honour with the holy symbols.

Otherwise, the rough, undressed walls, the soot-begrimed roof, the uneven earthen floor, the rude and scanty furniture, and the close, unwholesome air, are anything but suggestive of the holy and the beautiful. So, you will think, is the appearance of your host, who, besides the stains of daily labour, bears about him a savour of one who has an instinctive aversion to soap and water. There can, however, be no mistaking the warmth and sincerity of his welcome. The seat of honour by the stove is at your disposal ; and the mistress of the house brings from some secret hoard, not only black bread and milk, but some luxury in the shape of mushrooms or dried fish, with perhaps a "nip" of vodka. The inmates are curious and interested in your affairs and in the marvels of the foreign world, over which they shake their heads, half in wonderment and half in deprecation. They are simple, kindly, hospitable ; shrewd, too, within "the enchanted circle of their conceptions," as a Russian writer expresses it ; and patient and long-suffering almost to a fault.

With all his air of simplicity, however—which is sometimes more than half-affected—it would hardly be wise to trust the word of a Russian peasant, or in-

deed of a Russian of any rank. In a bargain he will probably cheat you, if he can. His regard for truth is of the slenderest; and he will tell you a lie—"open, gross, palpable"—with an air of innocence which could not be surpassed by the original wearer of the sheep-skin coat on his back. What can you expect? For centuries his "betters" have tyrannized over and often ill-used him at their pleasure; and fraud and deceit are the natural weapons of the weak.

In noting other features of his character also, while it is impossible not to perceive many blemishes, it is unfair not to keep in view the excuses he has for even his worst faults. He is lazy, shiftless, apathetic, you say, coming from the busy West; but entering the country from the side of Asia—and it should be remembered that the bulk of Russia lies to the east of Mecca—you wonder at the energy and industry of the peasant. The Russian labours hard while he is at it, and if he works spasmodically—in spurts, and not by long-sustained, determined effort—let it be remembered that it is only lately, if it is even yet the case, that he has begun to work for his own behoof. His strong sentiment of reverence, his friendly helpfulness to his fellow, and his love of country are good points that cannot justly be ignored; though it is true that his religious beliefs shade away into gross superstition, and that it is often not easy to discriminate his patriotism from prejudice and ignorance. But though you cannot help thinking, as you shake hands with your entertainer, how much his appearance could be improved with the aid of a pair of scissors and some soap and water, and that you would even sacrifice some portion of his piety and patriotism

in order to have him more truthful, honest, and sober, it is impossible not to part with kindly feelings from one who bears the burden of his hard lot with such cheerful good nature. The wonder is that so much good has survived, and not that so many rank weeds of evil have sprung up in so neglected a soil.

One cannot enter or leave the village without noticing the timber-built church, which, however lowly, will have its belfry and bell; and bears witness of the devotion of the humble worshippers in bright-painted walls and gilded weather-cock, and in the carvings and decorations placed about the altar. Near by is the house of the village "pope" or priest. There may be little to distinguish the dwelling from its neighbours,—the elder's house may be larger, and the village tavern possess more rooms,—and it is often the case that the worthy pastor himself is in nowise distinguished from his flock in learning or intelligence.

One of the causes of the backwardness of the rural parts of Russia is undoubtedly the ignorance and low social position of the "White" or parochial clergy. Many of them are devout and hard-working men, striving, not unsuccessfully, to raise and to purify those who have been given into their spiritual charge. Many others are "no better than they should be," even in morals—a parasitical race, a little more narrow-minded, lazy, and dishonest than those they live upon.

In excuse for them it must be said that these country clergy are miserably ill-paid. They have no social standing, and no stimulus to intellectual improvement. A parish priest is "passing rich" on £30 a year. His average stipend is said to be between £22 and £25, and

a share of the glebe. On this salary he has to maintain his family. He must daily rise between four and five in the morning, however far below zero the thermometer may be, read the liturgy before midday, and have vespers at sunset. Special services are required of him on innumerable other occasions during the year—on saints' days and holidays; at births, baptisms, betrothals, marriages, and deaths; in blessing processions and new buildings; and in times of harvest, pestilence, or public disaster. He keeps the parish register, and a minute record of all his offices for the eyes of his ecclesiastical superiors. He observes the long fasts of the Church, and on the great yearly festivals he goes the round of his parish, and says a prayer at every house. "On these festive occasions," says Mr. Lansdell, "refreshments stand on the sideboard, and *vodka* is offered to drink." Small wonder that the secular priest is often a beggar and a drunkard.

For the "White" clergy there is no hope of promotion to spur them on to higher aims and efforts. Between them and their "Black" brethren—the monastic orders—there is a great gulf fixed. To the latter belong, as to the monks of the Middle Ages, all the prizes in the ecclesiastical lottery. From their ranks are drawn the bishops, archbishops, and other functionaries of the Church, who wield a political as well as a sacerdotal authority. In the convents and monasteries are concentrated the theological learning and talent found in the Russian Church. It is easy to understand that jealousy and dislike exist between the "White" and the "Black" ranks of churchmen. The former are naturally discontented, and are largely suspected of sympathy with schism and of the practice of the Old Ritual. The in-

mates of the monasteries despise them as unlettered boors, in whom there is hardly a savour of holiness. The village pope is not only allowed to take a wife, but it is expressly required that he should be a married man or a widower, while the monks are vowed to celibacy and seclusion.

Great Russia is thickly scattered over with these monastic institutions, some of which we have already visited,—vast and richly endowed piles, the monuments of the piety, repentance, or policy of bygone generations of czars and boyards. The monkish caste pass a curious hybrid existence, half in a world of the past, and half in the stirring present. There are among them men of commanding talents and enlightened views, that hold in their fingers some of the most important threads that move the national policy; and there are ascetics and fanatics that keep before them an ideal of saintly perfection not a whit less eccentric than that of Peter the Hermit or St. Simon Stylites. There are prelates clothed in purple and fine linen, and bearing on their breasts not only the insignia of their sacred office, but the stars of secular orders; and there are half-naked anchorites who carry penance and mortification almost as far as the religious enthusiasts of the Middle Ages.

The total number of these monastic institutions—male and female—throughout Russia is about five hundred. In discipline and general character they are described as Egyptian rather than Roman. They are of three kinds—the *Lavra*, to which rank only Kiev, Troitsa, and St. Petersburg attain, *Cænobia*, and *Stauropegia*. Life is not all ease and recreation in these celibate establishments, as may be judged from the account of their

daily routine given by one of the monks of the Yurief Monastery at Novgorod to Mr. Lansdell :—" They rise at half-past two—at one o'clock on festivals—go to church till six, and from six to nine they sleep. Then they go to church again for an hour and a half, and afterwards breakfast. They are free to sleep or do as they please till five in the afternoon, when evening service brings them together for an hour and a half, after which they sup and go to bed. They have but two meals a day, never eat flesh, and when observing the fasts eat vegetables only."

It is still the Age of Miracles in Russia. Now and again there arise reports of "miraculous appearances" of the Virgin, and supernatural gifts of images or relics vouchsafed to some convent by the Mother of God or some favourite saint—George, or Sergius, or Nicolas—in reward for penance and sacrifice. Troops of pilgrims visit the old shrines for the cure of diseases, the removal of the reproach of sterility, the remission of sins; and if prayer and penance do not avail them, their faith is stimulated anew by the report of a recent miracle wrought at some less famous resort of the devout. In each reign a new saint is discovered, and after attestation of his sainthood by miracle, is duly canonized. Poor is the monastery that does not possess some relics having thaumaturgic virtues; and in many are preserved the incorruptible bodies of saint and martyr, still fresh and sweet as at the hour of death. The monks are ready to answer for the truth of all these wonders; but, as some one asks, Who shall answer for the monks? Who shall say, also, whether these same monks, living an isolated and morbid existence, with their minds fixed on one range of ideas, and

their individuality merged in that of their order, are the deceivers or the deceived?

The only other phase of country life that need be glanced at is that of the large landed proprietors—the gentry and nobility of Russia. It has already been said that in extensive districts the proprietors, since the emancipation of the serfs, have removed permanently into the towns, abandoning their country residences to neglect and decay. That, however, is a step in a process that has been going on for generations. Rural life has not the idyllic charms here that it is supposed to have in more western countries; and if the lord of the soil has lost his most precious privileges—his absolute power over his people—what attraction is there to keep him in his dismal and lonely country-house? He has acquired tastes for art and literature, or for modern amusements and dissipations; like his countrymen of all ranks, he has a passion for travel, or he has an ambition to win distinction in the army or in official life. These desires can only be gratified by abandoning the home and the ways of his fathers. The tendency, for long, has been for the nobility to drift farther and farther apart in sympathies and daily life from the mass of the people.

In one sense there is little room for regret that the “good old times” are coming to an end. In most respects they were wicked and brutal times, that are best buried out of sight. There can be no doubt that at no very remote period there were members of the Russian aristocracy who exercised their seignorial rights over the persons and property of their underlings in a scandalous and cruel manner; though, as we might expect from the national character, the relations existing between masters

and serfs were on the whole of a kindly nature. It is still not difficult to fall in with a Russian proprietor of the patriarchal type, who resides, as his fathers did, on his own land and among his own people in summer's heat and in winter's frost; who has gathered about him a numerous array of descendants and attendants, whom he rules as a father that does not believe in sparing the rod; who reads no books, or only one or two of a devotional kind; who eats and sleeps and dresses after the manner and at the times hallowed by ancient usage; who superintends and perhaps assists in the cultivation of his own estate, following old-fashioned methods instead of leaving it to some German overseer with new-fangled notions of modern cropping and farm utensils; who keeps a plain but hospitable and abundant board; who takes care that his wife and daughters live the secluded and contracted woman's life approved of by earlier generations of Russians, and who sees with dismay that his sons, that have been abroad in the world, are tainted with the foreign manners and ideas that are ruining his country.

We would like to preserve the proprietor of the old school as we would the fossil of some extinct animal. But his day and generation are past, and changed times have brought changed manners.

CHAPTER X.

ASTRAKHAN AND ORENBURG.



THE Volga in its lower course flows through the great Czarate or "Royalty" of Astrakhan. That immense territory curves round the northern end of the Caspian Sea for a distance of many hundred miles. In the map it seems to hover—if a country as large as Austro-Hungary can be said to hover—over the waters of that remote and desolate salt sea like a wide-pinioned bird, with one wing stretched towards the Caucasus, and the other touching the Ural range. While thus bounded by two great ranges of mountains, the region is a vast plain, much of the surface of which is beneath the level of the outer ocean.

The Caspian, as has already been said, is some ninety feet below sea-level. Its shores, except where they are overhung by the "cliffs Caucasian" or the buttresses of the Persian plateau, are for the most part low and tame. The shallow bays and inlets on its eastern side are fringed with barren sand-dunes and salt-marshes; and these dismal shores, except where at long intervals a Russian fort has been built, are only visited by wandering bands of Kirghiz and Turcomans. On the west

the white walls of a few old cities, such as Derbend and Baku, overhang the blue waters; and in the south are the Persian ports of Resht and Astrabad, the rich slopes of Ghilan and Mazanderan behind them, backed by the lofty ranges of the Elburz, with their sides clothed with forests and their highest summits crowned with snow.

All this does not redeem the shores of the Caspian from the reproach of sterility and baldness. From the thirsty desert to the eastward, whatever may have been the case in ancient times, when the Oxus is believed to have flowed into it instead of into the Sea of Aral, it receives no river save the Attrek. Apart from the Kur and the Ural, its other secondary affluents are of small consequence. It is by the Volga that the Caspian Sea exists. It is the enormous volume of water brought down by that great river from the forests of Russia that supplies from year to year the waste of water caused by evaporation under a broiling sun and by absorption in swamps and quicksands. The Caspian may be said to be a prolongation of the Volga—to be the basin over which it spreads itself, on finding that it has wandered into a hollow from whence there is no means of exit; and it is the Volga that gives it almost its whole commercial and political importance.

The ancients, and indeed the moderns, had most vague and incorrect notions regarding the “Hyrcanian Sea”—its size, its shape, the scenery of its shores, and its physical functions. They believed that a channel connected it with the sea of the Hyperboreans. It may have been from this misapprehension that the Volga makes so poor a figure in ancient geography, only appearing in a few

doubtful passages as the "Rha." Its wide channel may have been mistaken for that "inlet of the frozen ocean" on the existence of which almost all of the old and the medieval geographers insist.

At the same time, modern hydrographers, such as the late Major Herbert Wood, have pointed out that when the climatic conditions of Central Asia were wholly different from what they are to-day—before continual wars, with pestilence and famine in their train, had destroyed the flourishing states and laid waste the fine forests, the rich grain-fields, and beautiful gardens of Turkestan, and left behind only a bare and burnt-up desert; when, as the saying in these countries goes, a cat could crawl along the orchard walls and spring from fruit-tree to fruit-tree from the base of the Tian-shan to Khiva; or earlier still, when the Oxus and Jaxartes poured their united flood into the Caspian—the level of that sea must have been much higher than at present; while in prehistoric times its basin must have extended far over the level steppe to the north-eastward, and its surplus waters must have poured over the low watershed separating it from the head-waters of the Tobol and Irtish, making this isolated salt lake actually, as Strabo and Pliny represented it, a branch of the Polar Ocean.

The steppes that stretch away almost illimitably from the banks of the Volga, from Saratov downwards, still show traces of these ancient conditions. Life and motion and civilization are concentrated upon the river. Reminders of the world of the West may be seen in the wharves of Astrakhan, the neat churches and schools, and well-trimmed vineyards, melon-plots, and grain-fields

of the Lutheran villages, and the trailing smoke from the steamboat funnel. But when you turn your eyes towards the steppe, you perceive that you are in Asia. The Ural River and Mountains are usually regarded as the boundaries between the two continents. The real line of division, marked not only by the characteristics of the landscape, but by the race affinities, habits, and religions of the people, should be drawn up the Don to the point where it approaches closest to the Volga at Tsaritsin, thence by the latter river to the junction of the Kama, and by the Kama to the Urals. The lower Volga flows through what is really a section of Asia; and the Caspian is an Asiatic lake. To the Russian this territory is still a foreign and partially subdued country—a “land of promise,” where he is only beginning to obtain a firm foothold. The people are nomads, living in tents, roaming over the plain with their flocks and herds in search of pasturage and water—Mohammedan Kirghiz on the left bank of the stream, and Buddhist Kalmuks on the right.

The city of Astrakhan, built on one of the many islands formed by the delta of the Volga, is the only large centre of permanent habitation between the Ural River and the Terek. The present town only dates from the Russian conquest. It is altogether a commercial place, and has already 50,000 inhabitants. It is the *entrepôt* of the business passing between Russia and Persia and India, and the centre of the Caspian trade, which now employs many hundred vessels.

Few towns have a more curiously mixed and diversified population. Like every Russian town, Astrakhan is handsomely provided with churches for the Orthodox,

whose domes and cupolas give an imposing appearance to the city, whether approached by land or water. But there are also mosques for the sons of Islam, and meeting-places for the adherents of the Armenian and other creeds. It was once the centre from which zealous missionary enterprise was carried on by British and German evangelists. The Moravian Brethren had a flourishing settlement at Sarepta, at the point where the Volga delta begins; and the Scotch mission, with John Mitchell at its head, had its main station at Astrakhan, with branches at Orenburg and Karass, and even beyond the Caucasus. These operations have been stopped, but many of the fruits of them remain; and the name of Englishmen, still more of Scotchmen, has a good savour in the lower parts of the Volga.

The earlier cities that dominated this region—Atel, the capital of the Khazar kings; Sarai, where Baty with his horde sat down like an incubus on the bound and writhing carcass of Russia; and old Astrakhan, the seat of the Turkish dynasty that followed, and was finally overwhelmed by Ivan the Terrible in 1554—were all situated on or near the delta of the Volga, though it is now difficult to distinguish their exact sites. Atel, however, is still the title given by the Tartars to the great stream; while the new city at the Volga mouth preserves the name, and is built partly with the stones, of the old capital founded by the successors of Tamerlane.

Situated so far from the centre of Russian authority, the modern Astrakhan has not escaped misfortunes from civil uprisings and foreign attacks. The rulers of Turkestan and the nomad tribes of the steppe have more

than once tried to regain possession of their lost inheritance. But the turbulent regiments of Cossacks of the Don that guarded the country towards the Ural and the Caucasus constituted a greater danger than the enemy they were set to watch. The country during the seventeenth and the greater part of the eighteenth centuries contained all the materials, according to Rambaud, of "an immense *jacquerie*, being full of vagabonds of all kinds, ruined nobles, disfroked monks, military deserters, fugitive serfs, highwaymen, and river pirates."

These malcontents were always ripe for revolt and revolution. Thus in the "time of the troubles," under their leader Zaroutski, they seized Astrakhan, and ruled it in name of one of the many pretenders to the Russian throne. The archbishop was bound hand and foot and sent to Moscow. Seventy years later occurred the great Cossack rising under the celebrated bandit Stenko Razin, the Robin Hood of Russia. He overran all the Don and Volga countries, ravaged the shores of the Caspian, pillaged Persian towns, and for six or seven years threatened to wrest South-eastern Russia from the empire. At Astrakhan one of the voivodes, or civil governors, was thrown from a bell-tower and killed; and an imitator of Stenko improved on Zaroutski's treatment of the ecclesiastical authority, by stripping the archbishop of his robes, half-roasting him, and pitching him headlong from the belfry.

The last of the great Cossack risings was that of Pugatchef, in the reign of the Empress Catherine II. Pugatchef was a Cossack deserter from the regiment of the Yaik, as the Ural River was then called, and a *raskolnik*. He gave himself out as Peter III., the mur-

dered husband of Catherine. The discontented and the fanatical thronged to the pretender's standard, and the Volga, as far as Kazan, which he pillaged and burned, was soon in his hands. Catherine's power trembled; but the imperial troops under Suvarof and Mitchelson at length made headway against the rebel, hunted him into the salt-steppes to the eastward of Astrakhan, and captured him as he was on the point of escaping into Persia.

It was to blot out remembrance of this episode that the name of the Yaik River was changed; and the Cossacks who had taken the leading part in the revolt became henceforth known as the regiment of the Ural. To-day they are like Cossacks generally, an industrious, kindly, and hospitable race of military colonists; hardy and enterprising where warlike duties are required of them, but scarcely less energetic and successful as fishers, hunters, and agriculturists in time of peace. The unanimous testimony of travellers to the good qualities of the Cossacks is fast removing the bad name which their early turbulence and barbarity brought upon them.

Astrakhan is the great depôt for the produce of the sturgeon and other fisheries, on which the prosperity of the lower Volga and the Caspian so much depends. Great quantities of caviare are manufactured here, and exported to all parts of Russia. In this, as in other branches of its trade, Astrakhan owes much to Peter the Great. He came hither in 1722, on the occasion of his expedition against Derbend and the other cities of the Caspian; built the Admiralty, and founded trading companies with Persia and Turkestan. The English had, however, been here long before on the same mission.

In the reign of Ivan the Terrible, who encouraged British trade with the White Sea and Moscow, and carried his admiration of us so far as to propose marriage to our Queen Elizabeth, a London merchant named Jenkinson descended the Volga and hoisted the English flag on the Caspian within a year or two of Ivan's capture of Astrakhan. Jenkinson landed on the eastern side of this inland sea, loaded his merchandise on camels, started boldly into the interior, and reached Bokhara in safety, by a route which even to-day is very imperfectly known. Other journeys were made by the enterprising Jenkinson in the interests of his royal mistress, of the Czar Ivan, or of his own pocket; and it was partly in recognition of his services that authority was given three centuries ago to English merchants to trade in the principal towns of Russia.

Leaving Astrakhan and the banks of the river behind, and striking westward into the steppe, we are not long in discovering that though on the hither side of the Volga, with our faces Paris-wards, we are actually in Asia—among scenery and people that suggest the interior of Mongolia rather than the neighbourhood of a port frequented by passenger steamers and vessels of war. The soil is sandy or saline, and the herbage scanty and coarse. Fresh water is only met with at the end of a long day's march; and the bare plain, extending to the horizon, bears no trace of fixed human habitation. At long intervals the dingy gray expanse of the steppe is faintly mottled by the still more dingy felt tents forming the *aul* of a wandering tribe of Kalnuks; or we come upon a group of savage-looking shepherds watching flocks of cattle and sheep scarcely more rough-coated and

wild than their herdsmen. Then a party of Cossack horsemen files past on some picketing duty, or a train of camels laden with wool or felt-cloth moves slowly across the waste on its way to Astrakhan. We will pass on the route small basins, enclosed by sandy ridges, and covered by a saline efflorescence, looking in its dazzling whiteness like newly-fallen snow. In some of these depressions men will be seen at work cutting up the saline deposit—the residue of what once was a bitter lake—into cakes, and piling them up in pyramidal form for transport. On some height a rude windmill may occasionally be descried spreading its ragged sails; at intervals much more remote a *kuraul*, with its Buddhist temple of Chinese design, and wooden shanties for the high priest and inferior lamas, will be encountered. Otherwise there is nothing to occupy eye or mind.

Near the Caspian and the Volga stagnant pools of water are met with, but they are mostly brackish and undrinkable. The march is a continual climbing and descending of sandy hillocks, which have been blown by the prevailing winds into long ridges; or a sand-storm drives the sharp gritty or saline particles into the faces of the travellers, and obscures the air with whirling dust. The region at no very remote date—as geologists count time—has been the bed of a sea. Probably the Euxine and the Caspian mingled their waters in this depression. The soil and climate seem to be gradually growing more arid. In quite modern times the Kouma River made a small perennial contribution to the Caspian. Its lower course, except in rare occasions of heavy flood, is now a bare furrow between two sand-banks, with jungly thickets and marshes at the mouth, where

robbers sometimes find shelter ; and there is no permanent running stream between the Volga and the Terek.

The nomads inhabiting these steppes are for the most part Kalmuks. They are a Mongolian people, whose original home was in Soungaria, among the high grassy valleys of the Tian-shan range, to the south and east of Lake Balkash, and within the limits of what is called Chinese Tartary. Their ancestors formed part of a powerful confederation of Mongol tribes—the Tchoros, Durbot, Hoshot, and Torgot—formed by the Soungarian clans with the object of reconquering China, lost by the descendants of Ghenghiz Khan. The Oirats—the Four Allies—quarrelled with each other in later times ; petty chiefs made themselves independent and broke away from the confederation. The Kalmuks—the “remnant” or “residue” of the alliance, composed chiefly of the Torgot and Durbot tribes—could no longer hold their old ground against their enemies, and in detached parties, under various chiefs, they began their movement westward.

This last and not least remarkable of the Mongolian migrations into Europe began in 1670, and was completed about 1703. They crossed the steppes of the Kirghiz with their flocks and herds, their women and children, in spite of the opposition offered by these hereditary enemies, passed the Yaik, and spread over the then unoccupied plains between it and the Don. There they pastured their flocks and thrived in wealth and numbers till the year 1771, when a still more extraordinary impulse set them in motion again towards their home in the east.

Through some of the secret and mysterious sources by

which news travels in Asia they learned of a strange revolution in Soungaria. The Mongol inhabitants—their old allies and enemies—had been attacked by the Emperor of China, and of six hundred thousand souls not one, it was said, was left alive in the country. The Kalmuks determined to return and occupy their old home. They set out from the Volga in the winter of 1770–71, and began, on foot and on horse and camel back, with all their goods and chattels, their flocks of goats and sheep, their old people and their infants in arms, the three thousand miles' journey through the snow-covered desert.

The story of disaster and suffering has been brilliantly told by De Quincy in his "Flight of a Tartar Tribe." The Russian Government obtained word of the intended migration, and endeavoured to intercept the tribe at the Ural. They partly succeeded. The ice was not strong enough to bear the vast host of refugees, and the rear portion were "headed back" beyond the Volga into the present Kalmuk country. Half a million of souls, however, crossed the river and continued their flight across the Kirghiz Steppe, pursued by the Russians, harassed by the Kirghiz and other robber-tribes, and assailed by cold, hunger, and fatigue; and when the forlorn and destitute remnant of the "Remnant" at last reached their old haunts in the basin of the Ili, they found that the hope that had brought them so far had deceived them. The smiling valley was already occupied by Chinese military and convict colonies transported thither from the Middle Kingdom; and the choice of the wanderers lay between retracing the long road they had just traversed, or ascending to the cold hill

pastures and submitting to the yoke of Chinese authority and taxation. They adopted the latter alternative ; and their descendants, as we will by-and-by find, are still in possession of the grassy uplands of the Kunges and Tekes valleys, where they practise the same religion and follow the same traditional pursuits of sheep and horse rearing as do their kinsmen who still linger in the steppes of the Volga.

In some respects, no doubt, the European Kalmuks have benefited by contact with civilized neighbours. In the Russian towns they have a market for the wool, hides, and other produce of their flocks and herds ; and many of the comforts and inventions of Europe find their way to the Kalmuk tent. Their khan is chosen for them by the Russian Government ; a slight taxation is imposed upon them ; and they furnish some companies of skirmishers to the Russian army. Otherwise they are left pretty much to manage their own affairs.

Devout Buddhists as they are, their lamas wield a strong political as well as religious influence among them ; and they help to preserve the native language, customs, and dress. Nothing will induce them to settle down permanently at any particular spot ; even in the *kuraul* the high priest and his vicars have their brown felt tents set up by the side of their wooden huts, and remove to them in the winter. Visitors to the Kalmuk country have not been complimentary in their allusions to the manners and appearance of the tribe. Dr. Clarke, in his "Travels," commits himself to the strong statement that "nothing is more hideous than a Kalmuk." "High, prominent, and broad cheek-bones ; very

little eyes, widely separated from each other; a flat and broad nose; coarse, greasy, jet-black hair; scarcely any eyebrows; enormous prominent ears," are among the features with which he endows them; and he goes on to tell how they prepare their favourite steak of horse-flesh by placing it below the saddle and sitting on it during a day's journey, and to give other broad details of their domestic life and tastes, such as seldom now-a-days find their way into books of travel.

A recent observer, Mr. Wallace, bears scarcely less emphatic testimony to the supreme repulsiveness of these poor Mongols. "To say simply that they are ugly," he remarks, "is to pay them an unmerited compliment. There is something infra-human in their ugliness. They show in an exaggerated degree all those repulsive traits that we see toned down and refined in the face of the average Chinaman. As they belong to one of the recognized races of mankind, we must assume that they have souls; but it is difficult, when we see them for the first time, to believe that a human soul lurks behind their expressionless, flattened faces and small, dull, obliquely-set eyes."

All this is probably true, but there is evidence that even the Kalmuk is improving, in look and manners, with the times. According to our ideal of beauty he is certainly far from handsome; and his notions about cleanliness are most rudimentary. He still preserves the taste for horse-flesh which existed among his ancestors so long ago as the days of Herodotus, and he does not scruple to make a stew of dog, cat, or rat. But judging from the descriptions of M. Mely, one of the latest visitors to the country of the Kalmuks.

it would now be rash to say with Clarke that "they are more filthy in their persons than perhaps any other nation," and that "so horrid and inhuman is their appearance that it was difficult to distinguish the sexes."

Instead of "gigantic figures running about stark naked," M. Mely found the population rather elaborately dressed in striking costumes of red, white, black, and yellow, and the women markedly distinguished in their garb from the men. By the high priest he was entertained to an elaborately-served meal, which included caviare, champagne, and Nantes sardines, as well as mutton in every possible form;—the hangings of the guest-chamber of this celibate establishment were of *cretonne*, and represented the amours of Louis XV. On the walls of the adjoining temple were designs of gods and goddesses, on rice paper, executed by native artists, and showing no despicable skill; and hung around it was an imposing array of musical instruments—enormous trumpets of brass and silver, tambourines, gongs, and fifes—for the religious services in honour of Buddha. From the aspect of the country, the bare plains, the black tents, the flocks of horses, sheep, and camels, the prayer-mills, the peak-gabled temple, and the appearance of the people with their flat faces, tightly-drawn eyelids, thin beards, and pigtails, it was easy for the traveller to imagine that he had been suddenly transported four thousand miles eastward, and was in the heart of Thibet, the Holy Land of Chinese Buddhism.

The steppes between the Volga and the Ural are the continuation of those between the Volga and the Don.

and repeat the same features of scenery and soil. Here, also, are salt and thirsty plains, covered by a thin growth of coarse grass, wandering shepherd tribes, and rivers that lose themselves in the sand.

The people that occupy this tract are the Kirghiz of the Bukeief tribe—the Inner Horde, as they are called—who removed hither in the end of last century, when the land was left vacant on the departure of the Kalmuks for High Asia. They are of more peaceful and settled habits than their kinsmen beyond the Ural. But this is probably owing to their neighbourhood to the seat of Russian authority rather than from possessing more industrious and honest instincts; for they are an offshoot of the Little Horde, which in past times has been quite abreast of the Great and Middle Hordes in deeds of plunder and murder.

The country ranged over by this tribe extends almost to Orenburg and Orsk—the farthest outposts of Europe towards the east. Both are comparatively new cities; dusty, dreary, and formal, like all Russian towns of their class, but noteworthy as starting-places for the journey across the desert to Russian Turkestan and the famous cities of Central Asia. A traveller bound on such an expedition has generally to spend some days at Orenburg laying in supplies, selecting postilions, and making other preparations for the trip; and in this way it has come in for a larger share of descriptive notice than it perhaps deserves.

The most interesting of the features of Orenburg, as of Astrakhan, is the extraordinary diversity of type, language, and dress presented by its population. On the “threshold of Asia,” the Tartar elements that the

traveller has already observed, if he has come hither by way of Astrakhan or of Kazan, assert themselves more prominently. "The wide streets crossing one another at right angles," says Mr. Schuyler, "the well-built wooden and plastered houses, the shops, the churches, the boulevard and public square, the immense government buildings used for barracks, storehouses, and schools, give the place a thoroughly Russian air; while, on the other hand, the caravanseraï, with its beautiful mosque and minaret of white stucco—the Tartar mosque, the camels, in caravans, single or harnessed to waggons—the crowds of Tartars, the Kirghiz on horseback, in their dirty rags, with rude caps—the bazaar with the Bokharan, Khivan, and Tashkend merchants, in long robes striped with many colours, and with turbans on their heads, showed that the inhabitants of the place were thoroughly Asiatic."

Orenburg has been marked out as the starting-point of a line of railway advocated by M. de Lesseps, which the promoters propose to carry to Samarcand, and ultimately, perhaps, to India; and if this scheme is ever carried out, the future of the city will probably be a brilliant and prosperous one. We do not propose just now, however, to penetrate into Asia, either by railway train or on camel-back, having still a large area of European Russia to survey, and for the present must content ourselves with the glimpse of its bazaars and caravanserais, its desert plains and its roving horsemen, that can be obtained from the streets of Orenburg.

CHAPTER XI.

THE URALIAN PROVINCES.



THE flat monotony of surface presented by the Astrakhan Steppe is broken long before we reach Orenburg. There have been symptoms that a country of running streams, and what is much more rare in Russia, of mountains, is being approached. Cultivated land and permanent dwellings reappear; trees, in thin clusters and straggling lines, begin again to show themselves; the salt wastes become less frequent; and a thicker growth of grass covers the sandy soil.

On the upper waters of the Yaik, it is no longer possible to doubt that the lower spurs and valleys of the Ural chain have been entered upon. This great mountain range, one of the most important geographical features of the Russian Empire, extends in an almost north and south direction for between thirteen hundred and fourteen hundred miles; and for the greater part of that distance it forms the boundary of Europe and Asia. Few mountain systems of such extent have so low a general elevation and so marked an absence of predominating peaks. The highest section of the Urals is the northern portion—the “Barren Ural,” as the Russians

term it; but seldom do the summits rise beyond five thousand feet over sea-level, and few or none of them, even in the extreme north, are covered with snow all the year round. The declivity is more marked on the western than on the eastern side of the mountains; but so gradual is the slope in some places that, even when ascending from the European side, the traveller is scarcely aware that he has left the plains of Russia when he is already in those of Siberia. Formerly, when the passage across the mountains by the main route from Perm to Ekaterinburg was made by *tarantass*, a stone by the side of the track, bearing on one side the legend "Europa," and on the other "Asia," was sure to attract notice. Now the journey between these cities is made by rail, and the traveller learns of his passing from one continent to the other by coming successively to the stations of "Europa," "Ural," and "Asia."

From its highest point the "dorsal ridge" of the range gradually declines in height as it approaches the Frozen Ocean, into which it projects in a long peninsula, terminating at Vaygatz Strait, and separating the Atlantic from the Kara Sea. Vaygatz Island—a sort of "Holy Land" of the Samoyedes—is probably a prolongation of the chain; and the bare mountains of Novaya Zemlia beyond, running in the same general direction, and projecting far into the "Polar pack," may be regarded as a continuation of the Urals.

In the opposite direction also—towards the south—the height of the chain decreases, and in the province of Orenburg it separates into diverging ranges. Two of these run down into the Kirghiz Steppe, gradually merging into the waterless Ust-Urt Plateau, between

the Sea of Aral and the Caspian, or extending eastward in a low "saddle" that forms the water-shed between the Obi and the rivers of the steppe, and joining the great Asian mountain systems of the Tian-shan and Altai. Another branch follows the western bank of the Ural River, giving rise to scanty and intermittent streams, such as the Great and the Little Utzen, that disappear in the sands or spread into salt marshes; and it ends, like its rivers, and like many a caravan that has attempted to cross these wastes, by losing itself in the desert.

North of Orenburg, the Ural chain sharply divides the river systems of Siberia from those of Russia proper. All the rain that falls on the eastern side of the range finds its way into the Tobol and other branches of the great river Obi; while the streams running down its western slopes are tributaries of the Kama, and drain into the Caspian, or, in more northern parts, flow to the Atlantic by the Petchora. Great forests of oak and pine clothe the lower slopes of the range, and even the higher summits are often heavily timbered with birch and the hardier cone-bearing trees. Wild sequestered nooks are found in these hills, about the head-waters of the Kolva—the "tap-root" of the Kama—or in the innumerable gorges and valleys of the feeders of the Tobol, where the trapper and the mining pioneer have not yet penetrated; and in the deserted northern tracts, where there are no treasures of gold or of copper to tempt the prospector, the only inhabitants are a few Samoyede families, who wander with their herds of reindeer from dreary hill-side to barren valley in search of pasture.

The Urals, however, are rapidly becoming more thor-

oughly and extensively known. Their importance consists not only in the geographical position they occupy, and the meteorological and hydrographical functions they fulfil, but also in the variety and richness of their mineral wealth. Gold and silver have been found here from time immemorial, but it is only since the time of Peter the Great and the foundation of Ekaterinburg—named in honour of Catherine I.—that they have been worked in a systematic manner. Besides the more precious metals, including platinum, there are rich mines of copper, iron, and salt, quarries of marble, porphyry, and granite, and wells of naphtha and other mineral oils. Among the precious substances found are the emerald, topaz, agate, chrysolite, garnet, beryl, jasper, malachite, serpentine, and rock-crystals of great size; asbestos, gypsum, pipe-clay, sulphur, saltpetre, and nitre. Diamonds have been found, as Alexander von Humboldt had predicted, though none of large size. One newly discovered gem—named the Alexandrite, after the emperor—has the peculiarity of displaying two colours, crimson by day and green by night. It was with the object chiefly of throwing light on the peculiarities of their geological formation that pilgrimages were made to the great “Girdle” (as the name Ural means in the Tartar tongue) by Humboldt, Sir R. Murchison, and other distinguished scientists. The mines are partly the property of the Crown, and partly belong to the great Russian families Demidof, Stroganof, Lazaref, and others, who have enormous possessions in Perm and the adjoining provinces.

The Demidof mines are at Nijni Tagilsk, just beyond the Urals, but within the province of Perm, which laps

over into Asia. At these works thirty or forty thousand workmen are employed. The quantity of wood annually consumed as fuel at the forges, if it were built in a stack, would form a pile of logs twice as large as St. Paul's Cathedral. The principal minerals worked here are magnetic and manganese iron ores, both of remarkable richness, and also copper. Magnetic iron ore is found near the surface, and is dug out in terraces, and carted direct to the forges. The copper lodes are reached by a shaft six hundred feet deep, and in these workings Mr. Lansdell, the latest English visitor to the mines, dug out pieces of malachite in the natural state.

Of late years the yield from the mines of the Ural has largely increased in value; new methods of extracting the ore have been introduced, and wealth and population have flowed into and across the mountains, which have become a Russian California or Nevada. In spite of scientific and practical survey, much of the resources of the region have still to be discovered; and the "Girdle" of the empire is likely in the future to be still more valuable, and indeed indispensable, to Russian industry than it is at present.

Ekaterinburg, the capital of this metalliferous district, has an aspect and a society such as would hardly be looked for so far from the ordinary paths of commerce and culture. The town is regularly built, and many handsome houses line its clean and airy streets. As a matter of course, there are numerous churches and other public buildings, including a government mint and botanic gardens. The restaurants and hotels are admirably served; there is an admirable hospital and an orphanage supported by voluntary contributions; and

there are artistic, literary, and musical coteries quite abreast of Western Europe in their tastes and ideas.

The whole of the inhabitants of the town are more or less dependent on the forges and other mining establishments of which it is the centre. The lapidaries are famous for the artistic skill of design and delicacy of finish of the work they produce. Even the ragged urchins in the streets are dealers in precious stones and ores on a small scale; and the visitor unskilled in the detection of true from false jewels is likely to come away from Ekaterinburg with the impression that the culture of the population is more highly developed than their honesty.

The fishing, agricultural, stock-rearing, bee-keeping, timber-cutting, and fur trades also rank high in importance in the Uralian provinces; and the Kama is the great channel by which the products of the vast region comprehended within the governments of Kazan, Ufa, Perm, and Viatka—an area of two hundred and sixty thousand square miles, and containing nearly eight million inhabitants—reach the markets of Russia and Western Europe.

Before noticing, however, some of the aspects which nature and man present in this remote corner of Europe, we must say something of the famous city of Kazan, the vestibule to the Kama Valley and the key to much of its history. Kazan is situated not exactly at the junction of the Kama with the Volga, but some little way above, on the left bank of the latter stream, where it is joined by the small river Kazanka. There is little doubt, however, that the command it possessed of the entrance to the great eastern affluent of the Volga determined the choice of the site, and mainly contributed to its im-

portance—as was the case, in like manner, with a still earlier capital of this region, Great Bolgary, which once rose on the river bank some distance below the Kama mouth.

When part of the Bulgarian nation had migrated, under their leader Aspurach, to the southern side of the Danube, the power that had long ruled the Volga began to fall into decay from the assaults of the Tartars on one side and the Russians on the other. At the time of the Mongol invasions, Great Bolgary was ripe for overthrow, and the captains of the Golden Horde did not spare it. The city disappeared. A few mounds of ruins, among which have been found Cufic and Persian inscriptions and coins bearing Armenian and Arabic texts, alone attest its former importance and the extent of its commerce. The heterogeneous collection of half-Finnish, half-Tartar peoples inhabiting the banks of the Volga and Kama fell under the power of the Khans: Kazan rose in the place of Great Bolgary.

Sayn, son of Baty Khan, is said to have been the founder of Kazan; but whoever he was, he had a fine eye for situation and strategic importance. The city soon rose to wealth and political consequence. It broke loose from the control of Serai, and formed a separate khanate, that was sometimes at war and sometimes in alliance with the princes of the Nogai and Kipchak Hordes, and almost constantly at feud with the Grand Princes of Moscow. In the palmy days of Mohammedan rule it was a great seat of Oriental learning. Its mirzas, or nobles, were men of culture, of dashing and splendid exterior, and allied, many of them, by marriage to Russian families of rank; and its muftis, mollahs, and imauns

were deeply read in Arabic lore. Moscow borrowed from Kazan models of æsthetic taste as well as notions of polity.

At length the aggrandizing policy of the Grand Princes began to have its effects, and reprisals came from the side of Russia. Ivan the Great captured Kazan, though he could not keep it; and his grandson Ivan the Terrible finally destroyed the power of the khans after a bloody struggle, in which the Tartar city was repeatedly besieged by land and water. It was the first successful siege undertaken by the Russians according to modern rules of war. The final assault was directed by Czar Ivan himself, and led by Prince Kourbsky; and the bravery of the attacking force did not exceed the desperate valour of the Tartar warriors, who retreated from the walls to the palace of their prince Ediger, and died fighting around him. On this memorable day, the 2nd October 1552, the laws and authority of the Czars were extended beyond the Volga and Kama, and Russia stepped over into Asia.

The later history of Kazan has been on the whole quiet and prosperous, though so late as a hundred years ago it was ravaged and burned by the Cossack outlaw Pugatchef, and it has suffered at other times from more than its share of those destructive conflagrations that fall to the lot of every Russian town. To-day it is a larger, grander, and more learned city than ever it was under its independent rulers. It counts some ninety thousand inhabitants, famous throughout Russia for their industrial skill and enterprise. Finely placed on the steep slope of a hill overlooking the Volga and the Kazanka, with rich meadows spreading round it which are parti-

ally inundated when the rivers are in flood, the striking architectural features of the city are seen to the best advantage. Tall cupolas and minarets rise above the walls of the kremlin or from among the masses of private buildings and gardens, and prick the air in fantastic designs, in curious contrast to the ranges of smoking factory chimneys that in another direction bear witness to the busy industrial life of Kazan.

The chief manufacture of Kazan is its morocco or "Russia" leather ; and little less important are its soap and chemical works, its distilleries, and its workshops for the production of cutlery, jewellery, and cloth. It is the *entrepôt* of the commerce passing into Russia from the Caspian, from Central Asia, and from Siberia ; and hundreds of vessels that ply on the Kama here discharge their cargoes of fish, timber, minerals, and farm produce. But Kazan is still more justly proud of its academical distinction. Its university is one of the most thriving in Russia, the Oriental languages being studied here with especial success ; and the town is largely endowed with other means of instruction, in the shape of libraries, museums, observatories, botanical gardens, gymnasias, and normal, theological, and military schools.

Few mementoes of the period of Tartar rule remain in the old capital of the Khans ; and the Sumbeke Tower, which is popularly attributed to this era, was probably built at a much later period. Ivan the Terrible did all in his power to obliterate every memorial of the old regime, and even destroyed the tombs of the Tartar kings. The frequent fires have also cleared away the traces of the past. There are several mosques, and in the Tartar quarter the houses are built after the model

of the Mohammedan East; but it is in its population—about an eighth of which are still adherents of the creed of Islam—rather than in its architecture, that Kazan shows traces of its Oriental relations.

The Tartar inhabitants, however, have long ago lost the restless nomadic instincts of their ancestors and their passion for war and plunder. The original Mongol stock that came hither with Sayn Khan has disappeared, or been absorbed by later immigrants, and the language and type of features of the Tartars of Kazan are those of the Turki tribes that followed the banners of Tamerlane from the banks of the Oxus and Jaxartes. They are now the rivals of the Russians in the peaceful fields of commerce and manufacture, and writers could be quoted who place them above the Slavs in intelligence and industry. There can be little doubt that the Tartar is at least the more sober and more honest, and many of the highest positions of trust in the land are filled by individuals of the old dominant race. In their habits and domestic arrangements they strive to follow the laws of the Koran. In the interior of the houses of the better off a multiplicity of carpets, cushions, and divans take the place of tables and chairs, and the guest is treated with patriarchal hospitality and courtesy. Polygamy is recognized, though not generally practised; the women among the richer classes are kept apart in the harem, and though they now move abroad without the veil, they still shroud their faces in a shawl when a Giaour gazes at them too curiously.

The Government treats its Mussulman subjects with tolerance and equity. Attempts were made in earlier times to proselytize the Tartars to the Orthodox

Church. These were partially successful, so long as outward conformity to the Christian faith only was required, and large bribes were held out as the reward of conversion. But it soon appeared that the nominal converts were in secret as much attached as ever to their old customs and creed; and when ukases were issued, ordering that means should be taken "to pacify, imprison, put in irons, and thereby unteach and frighten from the Tartar faith, those who, though baptized, do not obey the admonitions of the Metropolitan," the utter failure of the official propaganda came fully to light. The Mohammedan population are now freely allowed to have their own ecclesiastical organization and to practise the rites of their faith, though the loss of civil rights and deportation to the Siberian mines is still the penalty of any attempt to persuade a Christian to apostatize to Islam.

In the villages of the province of Kazan, Mr. Wallace tells us, the two populations—Russian and Tartar—live together in perfectly good fellowship, in spite of their past rivalry of race and creed. "Near one end of the village stands the Christian church, and near the other the little metchet, or Mohammedan house of prayer. The whole village forms one commune, with one village assembly and one village elder; but socially it is composed of two distinct communities, each possessing its peculiar customs and peculiar mode of life. The Tartar may learn the Russian language, but he does not on that account become Russianized." To the simple Russian peasant there is nothing in the fact of his Tartar neighbour being an "infidel" to excite fanatical hatred such as would be aroused by the appearance of heretical

opinions among people of his own kith and kin. As one of them explained: "The Tartars, you see, received their faith from God, as they received the colour of their skins; but the Molo-kani" (Milk Drinkers, who do not observe the Orthodox fasts and reject the worship of images) "are Russians who have invented a faith out of their own heads."

The Bashkirs, a race closely allied in language, customs, and type to the Kazan Tartars, and also professing the Mohammedan faith, are as yet but half broken in to stationary and agricultural life. There are nearly half a million of them, compared with a million and a quarter of the "Tartars proper," in the provinces of the Ural and in the Orenburg steppes; a people partly living in tents and partly settled in villages, where they breed cattle and keep bees. The Bashkir is generally an intelligent and pleasant fellow, and the traveller may, as a rule, rely on his skill and trustworthiness if he engages him for the onerous duty of *yemstchik*, or postilion; for he will not get drunk, as a Russian or a Finnish driver probably would, and as a rule he will be careful, honest, and civil. Schools have been for some time established in the Bashkir country. The race are taking kindly to agricultural pursuits, and it is probable that they will ere long entirely give up their pastoral and nomadic life; and their example will probably be followed by the neighbouring tribes of Meshtcheriaks, Teptiars, and others, as Russian colonization encroaches upon their domains.

While the tribes of Turkish descent are for the most part found on the steppes, or on the margin of the forest region, seeming never well at ease while at a distance

from the open country, the still more numerous Finnish races of these parts prefer to hide themselves in the gloom of the deep woods. No ethnologist has ever succeeded in unravelling to his complete satisfaction the ancestry and race affinities of these aboriginal peoples of Russia. That a thousand years ago they had things pretty much their own way in the northern and eastern parts of Russia; that they are more closely connected by blood and language with the Turanian races of Northern Asia than with the Aryan peoples of modern Europe, and themselves form a division of the human stock that includes populations so widely separated and so diverse in culture as the Magyars of Hungary and the Samoyedes of the Obi, are doctrines pretty generally admitted.

As long ago as 886, the Magyars, under their leader Arpad, left their homes in the Ural, and passing the Carpathian Mountains, overthrew the barbarian power that Huns and Avars had established on the ruins of the Roman rule in Pannonia. The language and many of the legends of the dominant race of the Danubian plains still attest how closely they are akin to the rude peoples beyond the Volga. But the entangled relationships between Tcherimis and Tchuvash, of Votiak with Mordvin, of Permian and Zyranian, Voghul, Ostiak, and Samoyede, who shall unravel?

Some of these races are rapidly losing their peculiar type by amalgamation with the Russian colonists and adoption of their language and habits; and in a generation or two the old Permian and Zyranian dialects, into which St. Stephen of Perm translated the Scriptures five hundred years ago. may like many of the

other Finnish dialects, cease to be spoken as a living tongue, just as has happened with the Cornish and Cumbrian languages in our own country. Others of them, such as the Voghuls, are found on the Asiatic side of the Urals, in remote swampy and forest districts into which Slav immigration has hardly begun to penetrate, and are still a people almost in a state of nature, living by the chase of the elk and bear, the trapping of fur animals, such as the marten, the sable, and the beaver, and by fishing, and who acknowledge the authority of the Czar by an annual tribute of undressed skins.

The Samoyede lives far away, beyond even the limits of the birch woods, on the desolate *tundra* lands adjoining the Icy Sea, in a region where no one is likely to disturb him or envy him his heritage. On the other hand, the Votiaks, Tchuvashes, and Tcherimis are surrounded by Russian populations. They live in little communities apart, forming, as it were, islands, promontories, and peninsulas in the encroaching ocean of Slav immigration. Here they still speak their ancestral tongue, and practise their semi-pagan rites, and dress, eat, and live after the manner of their Finnish forefathers. "Their true habitat," says Latham, speaking specially of the Tcherimis, "is the oak-tree forest, with its underwood of buckthorn, spindle-tree, and hazel," occupying the ridges between the streams that feed the Volga and the Kama.

The limits of the region where Finnish customs and languages still prevail may be traced by the clearings and the river-courses—colonization, as in other countries, having followed the channels and valleys of the rivers. But it is not to be supposed that the enclosure and isolation of these aboriginal peoples mean that they have

been exterminated or driven forcibly back into the wilderness, as is the case in countries colonized by the Anglo-Saxon. The Russian has not our unconquerable pride and sense of national superiority. He does not consider himself so infinitely exalted above the people among whom he makes his home as to disdain to intermarry with them, or to feel it intolerable that they should occupy the same social footing with himself. A natural process of absorption of the original elements of the population has therefore been an accompaniment of Russian colonization; and throughout the northern parts of the empire there are large admixtures of Finnish blood, even in districts that now seem most characteristically Slav.

In the Kama Valley this process may be seen in active operation, and something has already been said of the rapidity with which the "Russification" of the country is proceeding. The "religious difficulty" does not interpose as an obstacle to the mixture of Russ and Finn, as it does in the case of Russ and Tartar. Officially the whole of the Finnish populations, with the exception of a few tribes that in earlier times were converted to Islam, are classified as Orthodox Christians. In reality, however, the nominal adoption of the "Russian gods" has made but little change in the religious beliefs of these races. Their observances, so long as their paganism was undiluted, consisted chiefly of magical rites performed by their "medicine men" to ward off the evil influences of the spirits of the wood, the river, and the snow, and to keep the unquiet ghosts of the dead in their graves, and familiarly-worded prayers to their gods, accompanied by presents for good harvests and successful fishing.

It was no difficult task to induce these primitive pagans to add the Virgin Mother and St. Nicolas to their pantheon, and even place them in the first rank of the invisible powers that dispense blessings and calamities among the children of men; but they did not think it necessary to lay aside their old divinities, to whom they still put up petitions and offer sacrifices. According to Wallace, Tchuvash peasants have been known to pray first to their own deities and then to the Greek saints for the good things of this life, or for vengeance on a neighbour. A Tcherimis, after recovery from illness, will sacrifice a young foal to Our Lady of Kazan, whose miraculous image was found unscathed in the ashes of a great conflagration, and whose shrine in the Bogoroditsky Convent, close by the kremlin of the old Tartar capital, is the most sacred spot in Eastern Russia. After all, this curious piebald faith of the Finns differs in form rather than in kind from the superstitious beliefs and practices of the Russian peasantry, and among the lower orders of both races Christianity and paganism blend insensibly into each other.

To reach the localities where the Votjak and Tcherimis are thoroughly "at home," it is necessary to make a long trip up the Kama or some of its tributaries. The Kama is a fine, deep, and swift-running stream, with scarcely a shoal or a cataract throughout its twelve or fourteen hundred miles of length; while many of its affluents—particularly the Viatka and the Bielaya—are also adapted for navigation. Its principal riches hitherto have been the fish that abound in its waters, the fine timber that clothes its banks, and the mineral treasures found around its springs in the Ural range. But agricul-

ture is now taking a prominent place among the occupations of the region; extensive clearings are found along its course, and large quantities of grain are grown and cattle raised on the rich deep soil from which the virgin forest has been cleared.

M. Armengaud has given a brightly-coloured picture of the "smiling villages and fertile fields" of the government of Viatka. "Fine churches of brick, of an architecture at once grave and graceful; labourers' houses of two stories, with ornaments carved in the wood; a population healthy, robust, alert, with figures full of freedom, eyes sparkling with gaiety, and a laugh sonorous and communicative; peasants clad like *bourgeois*; domestic animals well cared for and well nourished; active little horses, full of fire and vigour," are among the signs of progress and prosperity enumerated. Nor is this all. "For the first time astonished Russia sees her plebeian children careful of their persons, and attentive to the demands of the toilet and hygiene. Much more, she discovers them occupying themselves with education, and finds them with books in their hands. The peasant possesses the songs of Béranger translated into Russian; and if you watch the young daughter of the house, you will surprise her in some solitary corner with a novel of Dumas *père* in her hand."

This is all very charming, and perhaps generally true, but the colours of the sketch may be heightened a little in order to bring out more effectively the contrast offered by Finnish village life, to catch a glimpse of which a long and rough drive through the oak and pine forests is necessary. Writers differ in opinion on the

question whether the Tcherimis or the Votiak is the dirtier in his person and dwelling and the more uncouth in his garb. Where "doctors disagree" on so fine a point, it would be unjust to pronounce an opinion; and it will probably be thought enough to know that the filth and squalor amid which the Finnish peasant of either tribe contentedly lives are inconceivable, and intolerable to a moderately fastidious eye and nostril.

It is generally admitted that the Votiaks, who number two hundred thousand in Viatka, of which probably they were the original occupants, surpass all competitors in their taste for strong drink. A large proportion—perhaps the majority of them—have fiery red or auburn tresses; while the ordinary type of Finn is swarthy of skin and lank and dark of hair. The broad, flattened face, however, bears testimony of relationship to Turk and Tartar; while, like the rest of their kin, the Votiaks are generally undersized, and clumsy in their movements, and somewhat slow in intellect. They are a saturnine, sad-mannered people while among strangers, whatever they may be with their intimates and over their cups, and more than half conscious of their backward condition, and glad to skulk back again to their woods with their little purchases and gains. They are said to be revengeful and moody in temperament; and their resentment takes odd forms.

M. Rambaud, with a Frenchman's passion for a generalization, says that when the Tchuvash "wish to revenge themselves, they hang themselves at their enemy's door." At the same time, these ancient peoples are not without virtues to set against their blemishes; and they are said to compare favourably with their

Russian neighbours in truth-telling and honesty. To their costumes, however, little commendation can be paid. They are antediluvian and ugly. Their legs are swathed in innumerable folds of filthy rags that even a Neapolitan lazzaroni would be ashamed to wear. The Votiak women bear about on their heads a prodigious structure, chiefly composed of white birch bark, bound with linen bands, and adorned with silver trinkets, coins, streamers, fringes, and embroidery. The Tchuvash ladies don a peaked helmet, and have their backs cased in a covering of leather and metal, "like the trappings of a war-horse." Their sisters among the Tcherimis, says Rambaud, "wear on their breasts two plates forming a cuirass, and ornamented with pieces of silver, transmitted from generation to generation. A numismatist would make wonderful discoveries in these walking museums of medals."

Poor Finnish folk! We may smile at their antique notions of the beautiful and the becoming, but there is something tragic in the thought that they are condemned thus to mould and rust in the damp nooks of their woods, or to be transmuted and absorbed by the conquering race. Their day of grandeur dates at least a thousand years back. This basin of the Kama, and all Northern Russia from Lapland to the Urals, formed in medieval times the powerful state of Biarma, or Beorma, a name that survives in the modern Perm. It seems to have been a kind of Finn confederation, in which the dominant tribe was the Tchuds, now nearly extinct. They carried on commerce with India and Persia by the Volga and the Caspian Sea, and repelled many an incursion of Norse and Icelandic rovers. England held com-

munication with Great Biarma long before the name of Russia was heard of in these islands. Other of Halgoland, one of the sea-captains of King Alfred, made a voyage of discovery to this hyperborean power; and the king, with his own royal hand, wrote an account of the expedition in Anglo-Saxon.

The capital of Biarma is believed to have been situated high up the course of the Kama, probably near Tcherdyn, where considerable ruins are still seen, and gold and silver ornaments, wrought with Indian and Persian designs, have been exhumed. The existence of the precious metals seems to have been known even at this time, and Biarma was a sort of El Dorado of the Scandinavian pirates. Marvellous tales were told of the treasures of gold and precious stones in the palace of the Biarmian kings, and in the magnificent temple of their god Yumala. This structure was said to be built of odoriferous woods, richly carved, and so thickly set with precious stones that it gleamed like a sun over the adjacent country. As for Yumala himself—the Zeus, the Jove, the Odin of the Finns—he bore on his head a crown of jewels, round his neck an immense collar of gold, and in his hand a chalice worth a king's ransom.

By-and-by came the "Good Companions" of Great Novgorod, ascending and descending the streams, drawing their skiffs over the low water-sheds, spreading over the whole north and north-east of Russia, and conquering the Finn peoples by means of the "arms of precision" of the day. The first Novgorodian colony was founded in the twelfth century. A commercial city sprang up at Khlynof—now Viatka—and a flourishing republic was established, and maintained its indepen-

dence till after the downfall of the parent city on the Volkhov. The conquests of the Tartars of Kazan; the proselytizing zeal of St. Stephen, who, about 1372, built the first Christian church, drove out the sorcerers, stopped the sacrifices of reindeer, and cast down the "Old Golden Woman" who had usurped the place of Yumala; and, lastly, the aggrandizing policy of Ivan the Great and Ivan the Terrible, completed the overthrow of the Russ republic and the Finnish state. By the fall of Kazan, the authority of the Czars was extended to the Urals, and soon crossed them.


At the modern town of Perm, and the villages and hamlets sparsely scattered along the Upper Kama and its tributaries, there are few attractions to detain the traveller who may choose to enter Siberia by this route. Society is in an inchoate state. The face of the country is only beginning to assume a civilized look, as the shaggy growth of forest is pruned away and the marshes are rudely drained. The population is composed to a large extent of the same rough and strangely assorted materials that one may find in a newly-settled western state of America—miners and forgers, trappers and hunters, raftsmen and woodcutters, fishermen and pioneers, dwelling in rude wooden shanties, and clearing the virgin forest in order to lay down their crops of rye and barley. You may meet here Leatherstocking, clad in Russian national garb of sheepskin coat and heavy boots; or witness at some "mining camp" in the spurs of the Urals the grim humour and still grimmer tragedy of Poker Flat, or Red Dog, repeated with appropriate local colouring.

Still more wild and chaotic is the world of thought

and passion seething beneath the surface, invisible to the official eye. The government of Perm has been a place of banishment for political offenders, and men and women who have come under the ban of the ecclesiastical law. It has been a Cave of Adullam for the oppressed, the discontented, the restless, and the fanatical. There are communities of Poles, banished thither for taking part in the risings of 1832, 1848, and 1864; and not far off hamlets of raskolniks (champions of the Old Ritual), the solitary cabins of Priestless People, or colonies of schismatics and heretics of still more extreme types, with incarnate "Messiahs" and "Virgins" among them to whom they pay a blind devotion; while beneath, spreading their secret mines far and wide under all sections of society, are Socialist and Nihilist associations, uniting men who perhaps have little else in common than the universal feeling of discontent and unrest.

CHAPTER XII.

NORTHERN RUSSIA.

“HE Province of Russia,” says the worthy Marco Polo in his Travels, “is an exceedingly cold region, of vast extent; and I have been assured that it extendeth even unto the Northern Ocean, and bordereth upon the Region of Darkness, because during most part of the winter months the sun is invisible, and the atmosphere is obscured to the same degree as that in which we find it just about the dawn of day, when we may be said to see and not to see.”

Over this darkling hyperborean land, whose features even in the brief summer are half hidden by dense woods and Arctic fogs, we have now to cast our eyes. The quaint words of the Venetian traveller indicate the vague and misty notions that prevailed regarding the northern parts of Europe in his day—the close of the thirteenth century. It cannot be said that our knowledge of the region has even yet wholly left the twilight stage. The contour of the coasts, the courses of the streams, the positions of the villages and little towns thinly sprinkled over a vast territory, and the names of most of the lakes and fens, have long been known. It

is seldom, however, that either business or pleasure brings a stranger into the forest-wildernesses of Vologda or Olonetz, except while traversing the well-beaten routes leading from Archangel to St. Petersburg and to Moscow. Still fewer are the visits paid to the bleak, treeless wastes extending along the shore of the Arctic Ocean from the Asiatic frontier across the mouths of the Petchora and Mezen to the White Sea, or to the lichen-covered hills and dark mossy tarns of Lapland that stretch westward of that gulf to the neighbourhood of the North Cape.

And if these gloomy forests and solitary coasts have few attractions even in the brief but fierce summer, how forlorn and forbidding must they be during the long, dark Arctic night, when the woodman or the fisherman is cut off from his fellows not only by wide distances and deep thickets and marshes, but by the masses of snow, yards in depth, that encumber the rough footpath or waggon-tracks; when the bare tundra-lands are swept by the Polar tempests, bombarded by hail-storms, and besieged by the heavy pack-ice, and Lapp and Samoyede cower in underground burrows, and pray to their divinities for the speedy return of spring!

But even the most remote and desolate tracts are not without traces of the presence of man—for a portion of the year at least. How thin the population is in some parts, however, may be judged from the fact that in the three northern governments of Archangel, Olonetz, and Vologda—a territory with an area exceeding that of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom combined—there are only about a million and a half of inhabitants, or less than three to the square mile. You will find on this northern slope as in the Italian provinces

we have just quitted, examples of all the stages of civilization. A fine, sturdy Slav peasantry—a population as vigorous and well grown as any in Europe—is in contact and in contrast with the diminutive, half-nomad peoples that dwell within the Arctic Circle. At Mezen, one of the most northerly inhabited spots in Europe, are political exiles, some of them men of birth and education, living in the midst of a semi-barbarous race that range from place to place in search of food for their flocks of reindeer, or pick up a precarious livelihood by fishing in the streams, hunting the white bear, walrus, and seal on the ice, or searching along the shore for the remains of a stranded whale. Races addicted to the grossest pagan practices are in contact with the fiercest zealots for Orthodoxy and the strict letter of traditional faith that are to be found in Christendom. Religious fanes, blessed not only with the possession of miracle-working bones and images, and the undecayed bodies of sainted thaumaturgists, but with official and autocratic favour—it might almost be called patronage—may be discovered in lonely islands of the White Sea. But to reach them, forests have to be traversed that have for centuries been the retreat of uncompromising schismatics, who look on monkish piety as an abomination and monkish learning as blasphemy.

Archangel was the first Russian port; and it is still in some sense the only place of large maritime trade where the soil, the language, and the customs are thoroughly Russian. The commercial community at the mouth of the Northern Dwina has been for a longer period than any other in contact with European, and particularly with English, influences. commercial and

social. But in the country immediately behind it, the primitive Russian life has continued down to our day little changed by inward movement, and almost uncontaminated by innovation from without. The boyards were never able to exercise an oppressive authority over the farmers, wood-cutters, and fishermen thinly sprinkled throughout this vast and almost inaccessible region of forests and lakes. The institution of serfage never took root here; and when the day of emancipation came, it was found that there were only five bondsmen in this northern area to set free.

On crossing the water-shed from the Kama to the Dwina—the great drainer of the lands inclining towards the Northern Sea—one sees, at least at first, little change in the scenery or in the occupations of the inhabitants. The forests, lakes, and morasses are, perhaps, on a larger scale; and so, too, are the trees, some of them monster larches, firs, and spruces of two hundred and three hundred years' growth. The first beginnings of the Dwina and its tributaries are buried under the dense shades of these ancient woods. The resinous odour of the pines fills the air; the surface may here and there be diversified by knolls and glens, but everywhere the sombre plumes of the coniferous trees assert themselves as the prevailing features of the landscape with implacable monotony. The clearings are smaller and more widely separated. In the more remote localities, towards the base of the Urals, the inhabitants—Zyranians mostly—are peltry hunters, who follow their furry prey in moccasins of half-dressed deerskin, like Hiawatha—

“ Over river, hill, and hollow,
Through interminable forests,
Through uninterrupted silence ”

and of whose simple scheme of existence the hewing of the forest or the tilling of the land forms no part.

Nearer the sea, in the central districts of Vologda, wood-cutting and rafting, the distilling of turpentine and tar, fishing and fish-curing, the raising of cattle and exportation of hides and tallow, form the occupations of the inhabitants. Villages, and even considerable towns—such, for instance, as Veliki Oustoug, an old Novgorodian post, now a town of eight thousand inhabitants—are met with on the banks of the streams, which are the main and often the only means of communication. These sequestered communities often enjoy not a little comfort and commercial prosperity, and have their full share of public "institutions," including churches. Thus Vologda, the capital of the province of that name, is provided with some sixty churches; and, in spite of its high latitude and rigorous climate, it is possessed of so many amenities that it has been termed an "Arctic paradise." In Kargopol, a town of two thousand souls, in Olonetz, Mr. Hepworth Dixon says he counted twenty spires.

In some spots specially favoured by southern exposure and fertile soil a little barley, rye, oats, and buckwheat are grown, but not nearly enough for the needs of the population. As in the times of Master Richard Chancelor of the ship *Edward Bonaventura*—the first from our own shores to visit these quarters!—the people still draw their supplies of corn from the more fertile countries to the south. The English mariner, in the year after the taking of Kazan, journeyed by land and water from the mouth of the Dwina to Moscow, which he found to be a city "greater than London with the suburbs, but very rude, and standeth without order;" and he would meet in a

morning many hundred sledges, some carrying corn and some fish, going to and from "the north part of the Duke's dominions, where the cold is so extreme that it will suffer no corn to grow."

In the lower course of the Dwina, within the government of Archangel, and near the shores of the White Sea, even such partial attempts at cultivation are abandoned, and the population are traders, fishermen, lumbermen, and sailors. Spring and autumn are brief intervals of deluging sleet and rain and thick fogs interposed between nine months of grim winter, when land, river, and sea are bound together under a thick covering of ice and snow, and three months of scorchingly hot summer.

With the coming of the genial warmth man seems to imitate nature, and to strive by energetic and ceaseless activity to make up for the long period of enforced inaction. As soon as the streams are clear of ice, rafts of timber begin to descend the Dwina and its tributaries; and the river and its banks present a scene in strange contrast to the white and silent desolation that had reigned a few weeks before. The banks and islands are moist, and green with grass and rushes; the pines, that had during the winter looked like a forest of crystal, have shaken the snow from their branches, and the lighter tints of the new shoots show in beautiful contrast to the sombre shade of the older foliage; and the young leaves begin to sprout on the birch and willow. The stream itself, instead of a silent white avenue of ice, is a fine broad rushing current, down which lines of rafts and *praams* bear the lumbermen with goods and a few ragged pilgrim passengers to the sea. The *praam* is a rudely constructed craft, hurriedly

put together for the single voyage down the Dwina to Archangel with its cargo of oats and rye, where it is generally sold and broken up, the strength of the current preventing these clumsy vessels from ascending the stream.

The mouths of large tributaries, such as the Vichegda, the Vaga, and the Pinega, each leading to extensive but little known districts, are passed in the downward course, and some thirty or forty miles above Archangel the village of Kholmogory is reached. It is now a small place, but is convenient for taking a survey of the past history and settlement of this northern region.

In later times Kholmogory has derived notoriety from being the place of banishment and death of the Empress Anne Leopoldovna, on the accession of her cousin Elizabeth, daughter of Peter the Great. But it has an earlier title to fame. Some writers conjecture that it was the site of the capital of Biarma-land, and of the far-renowned temple of the god Yumala. The Northmen came hither to trade and to fight before the days of Ruric; and Holmgaard, the "Great City," as they called it—which has been corrupted by Russ tongues to Kholmogory—makes a great figure in Norse and Icelandic sagas.

It is in the narrative of the voyage of Other, written by King Alfred about the year 890—about the time when the Varangian princes were transferring the seat of their authority from Novgorod to Kiev—that we have the first sober and authentic record of the navigation of the White Sea, and, perhaps, of the discovery of the mouth of the Dwina. The description of this Ancient Mariner agrees with remarkable accuracy with the condition of

the northern coasts and their inhabitants down to the present hour.

Other or Ochter of Halgoland, in Norway, as appears from the quaint old narrative, was "once upon a time" seized with the desire "to find out how far the country extended due north, and whether any one lived to the north of the wastes occupied by the Northmen." He proceeded on his adventurous voyage—the first expedition of Polar discovery in modern times—at first north, then due east, along a waste shore, until he found the coast bowing directly towards the south, and the sea opening into the land, he could not tell how far; and up this gulf he sailed with a northerly wind for five days. "A great river lies up this land, and when they had gone some way up this river, they returned, because they could not proceed far on account of the inhabitants being hostile,"—the "Biarmas" having well peopled the country on one side of the stream. On the right of the navigator during his voyage, up till this point, "the land was a desert, and without inhabitants, except fishermen, fowlers, and hunters, all of whom were Finnas; and he had a wide sea on his left."

It was not long before the merchant adventurers of Novgorod made their presence felt in this region; and they settled themselves at Kholmogory and other convenient points near the mouth of the Dwina, and had even a post at Mezen, on the Arctic Circle. Thriving trading-stations began to be established on the banks of the great lakes and rivers of this northern land, and commerce to pulse through the arteries of the Volkhov, the Svir, the Onega, and the Dwina, and Lakes Ladoga and Onega. between Great Novgorod and the White Sea.

Anchorites wandered into these countries in search of "deserts" and waste places where they could build their little cells and chapels and live entirely secluded from the world. Missionaries went forth under the protection of the republic to preach the gospel to Finn and Samoyede; and the bands of Good Companions zealously strove, as was their wont, to drive home Christianity at the pike's point.

Sometimes the authority of Bielozersk, on the banks of the White Lake, nearly equidistant from Novgorod and Archangel, extended over a great part of the region. This remote principality had been a seat of warlike and monkish renown since the days when Sineous and Truvor, the brothers of Ruric, established themselves there; and in later times its possession was often contested between Novgorod and the Grand Princes of Suzdal, Vladimir, and Moscow, before it finally fell into the power of the latter. The neighbourhood is still thickly sprinkled with monasteries, churches, and shrines; and the sandy shores of the White Lake are annually the resort of pilgrims on their way northward to the still more sacred soil of Solovetsk, on an island in the White Sea.

The invasions and civil commotions in the south, and the religious persecutions of Nikon, helped to people the territory. During the Interregnum, in 1613—the year that young Michael Romanoff was chosen Czar—the Poles penetrated to Vologda, which they pillaged and burned; and at a still later date Bielozersk was destroyed by a band of Lithuanians and Cossacks of the Ukraine. But as a rule there was profound stillness and peace in the recesses of these northern forests as there is in the

Sir Hugh's journal, as quoted by Hakluyt, "wee saw beares, great deere, foxes, and diuvers strange beasts, as ellons (elks) and such other ; which were to us unknown and also wonderfull. Seeing the yeare farre spent, and also very euille wether, as frost, snow, and haile, as though it had been the deepe of winter, wee thought best to winter there."

Here, alongside the remains of the goodly vessels, the frozen bodies of the brave seamen were discovered next spring by Russian fishermen, all having died miserably of cold and hunger. Chancellor held on his way in the *Edward Bonaventura*, entered the White Sea, discovered, or rediscovered, a great river, the Dwina, on the banks of which were already two monasteries—those of St. Nicolas and St. Michael the Archangel, near which the new port of the north was afterwards to rise—and found, to his astonishment, that all this country was under the Grand Duke of Muscovy, Ivan the Terrible.

The enterprising sea-captain ascended the Dwina to Vologda, and thence made his way to Moscow—a journey about as long and arduous as a trip across Siberia would be to-day—and successfully carried out his mission, obtaining leave for English ships to trade with the Dwina. On a second voyage, agents of the Company were established at Kholmogory and Vologda, and Chancellor returned home with the governor of the latter town as the first Russian ambassador to England. He perished, however, with his ship in a storm on the Scottish coast, though the envoy was saved, and was received with high honours in London.

A crisis in the history of Archangel—whose painted

spires and wooden shanties soon began to rise on the swampy river bank—arrived a century and a half later, when Peter the Great was founding his new capital on the Neva. He wished to close the port of Archangel in order to encourage the trade of St. Petersburg. This blow was averted, and Peter instead took the town under his especial care. “He fetched,” says Mr. Hepworth Dixon, “masons from Holland to erect lines of bastions, magazines, and quays. A castle rose from the ground on the river bank; an island was reclaimed from the river and trimmed with trees; a summer palace was built for the Czar; and a fleet of ships was sent to command the Dwina mouth.”

Though Riga and St. Petersburg have carried away the bulk of the commerce from the centre of the empire—which in the early times, when Russia was shut out from the Baltic, found its way to the White Sea—Archangel has maintained, and is likely to maintain, a respectable position as the outlet for the wealth and trade of Northern Russia.

The modern aspect of Archangel has been picturesquely sketched by Mr. Hepworth Dixon, and its social life and manners humorously and pithily described by Mr. Edward Rae. The former speaks of it as “a camp of shanties, heaped around groups of belfries, cupolas, and domes. Imagine a vast green marsh along the bank of a broad brown river, with mounds of clay cropping here and there out of the peat and bog; put buildings on these mounds of clay; adorn the buildings with frescoes, crown them with crosses and cupolas; fill in the space between church and convent, convent and church, with piles and planks so as to make ground for gardens

streets, and yards; cut two wide lanes from the church called Smith's Wife to the monastery of St. Michael, three or four miles in length; connect these lanes and the stream with a dozen clearings; paint the walls of church and convent white, the domes green and blue; surround the log-houses with open gardens; stick a geranium, a fuchsia, an oleander, into every window; leave the grass growing everywhere in street and clearing,—and you have Archangel."

The English traveller who lands here may feel that in one sense at least he is on his native soil. The strand all along the river bank is formed of the ballast that has been discharged from the hundreds of vessels, chiefly British, that every year come to Archangel to load cargoes of grain and flax, tar and turpentine, tallow, hides, oil, whalebone, fish, wax, timber, and spirits, furs and reindeer-tongues—everything, in fact, which the thrifty Russian has to sell; while he purchases the minimum of foreign luxuries in exchange. The twenty thousand inhabitants of the place are wholly devoted to trade or to religion. Archangel long held a high reputation for honesty in business transactions, and perhaps it still compares favourably with other Russian trading communities. But the traveller, and still more the merchant or shipmaster, will have frequent occasion for observing here, as elsewhere in the empire, that the standard of commercial morality is not superfluously high. In spite of the abundance of public buildings and educational institutions—"cathedral, fire-tower, town-hall, court of justice, governor's house, and museum," with numerous seminaries—municipal enterprise and literary life do not seem to thrive; and Mr. Rae remarks that

the only branch of science to which he found the inhabitants attached was "the collection of coins—modern coins."

Still more curious to those who forget that the Dwina is to the eastward of the Euphrates, and that they must consequently look for Oriental as well as Arctic conditions, is the fact that in a port which is so much frequented by strangers there does not exist anything that in a Western city would be called a hotel. Other evidences of Eastern taste, and perhaps of ancient intercourse with the civilization of the Arabs, are to be seen in the design and workmanship of the silver crosses and other ornaments worn by the peasantry of these northern districts. Many of these are figured in Mr. Seeböhm's book; and Mr. Rae, who was also an industrious collector of them, declares that so closely do the Northern and Eastern types harmonize, that it is impossible to tell, in certain classes of work, whether the ornaments come from Russia, Iceland, or Barbary. Mr. Howorth, in his "*History of the Mongols*," accounts for the Eastern character of the northern silver art by the intercourse of Arab traders with the Khazars, Bulgars, and Biarmas of the Volga countries, and the incursions of the Norsemen in the Levant; and the Byzantine origin of the Russian Church has also had its influence.

One reminiscence the summer sojourner at Archangel or in any of the countries around the White Sea is sure to bear away with him—the bite of the mosquitoes. Myriads of these insects awake to life in the short hot season of almost perpetual daylight; and they make up for the briefness of their opportunities by ubiquitous activity. The natives seem to have become partially used to them.

but they "smell the blood of an Englishman" or other foreigner with unfailing acuteness, and are unremitting in their attentions to the stranger. Mr. Cornelius Stone mentions in his account of his travels in New Guinea that neither there nor in Persia, India, Burma, Java, America, or any other country he had visited, had the number of mosquitoes "exceeded *one-tenth* of what they did in travelling through Lapland, from the Arctic Circle to the Gulf of Bothnia, during the summer months." On this journey, he says, "I once counted on my right arm alone one hundred and thirty; two pairs of trousers were scarcely sufficient protection; and I was always compelled to wear a couple of veils round my head, made into a sort of bag. I never wish to visit that part of Lapland again in summer."

Mr. Rae's account of his sufferings is even more pathetic; in short, such is the universal testimony of travellers by land and sea in these regions regarding the remorseless and intolerable assaults of these pests, that to give a description of the White Sea shores and omit all mention of them would be like presenting a melodrama with the part of the "villain" left out.

Dropping down the Dwina, threading the way between the marshy flats, shifting mud-banks, and low green islands, partly covered by scrub, that divide the streams forming the delta of the river, catching a glimpse now and then of the walls of a church or convent, a custom-house or a ferryman's cottage, or a humble cross set up by some pious sailor in token of his deliverance from peril by sea or his safe return from a whaling cruise among the Polar ice, having always in sight on the right and on the left the dark wall of pines bounding the

course of the river and stretching back interminably into the interior, we reach the buoys marking the entrance to the navigable channel, and are afloat in the waters of the White Sea.

The materials are few for supplying a picture of the aspect of this inlet of the Northern Ocean during two-thirds of the year, when it is bound from shore to shore with frost and invaded by heavy drift-ice; when swamp and forest and heath are alike buried under heavy snow, and the sparse population hibernate like the bears, cowering over the fires in their log-cabins or in their sod-built *gammer*. Not many travellers have been found devoted enough to brave the rigours and discomforts of a winter among the Lapps or the Samoyedes, or even of testing the amenities of life at that season of the year in the trading-ports of Archangel, Onega, and Kem.

In summer the shores of the White Sea are in a few spots picturesque and even pretty. Fogs hang over the water, and for days shroud the land from sight; sharp frosts and cutting showers of hail and sleet not only "chill the lap of May," but intrude in the hot summer weather of July, if the wind shift to the north-east. But in the bright sunshine even the shores of Lapland put on a kind of flickering smile.

On the southern shore of the long Gulf of Kandalaks, a district inhabited by Karelians, a quiet, kindly-mannered Finnish race of fishermen, there are some charming bits of forest and river scenery. "A clearing on the forest edge, a small box-shaped log-hut, with blue smoke wreathing from it, a few racks for drying nets, a boat drawn up on the shingly beach, another afloat, an apparatus for drawing salmon nets, a cross standing on a

rock, a sea-eagle sailing overhead, a sunny sky and a sunny sea, a background of spruce and birch, a strip of fir near the beach—gray and blasted as if by some poisonous breath,”—such, says Mr. Rae, are the usual surroundings of the fisherman’s *isba* on the western side of the White Sea. Every summer these poor people make a journey of a thousand miles to the fishings on the desolate Murman coast, in Northern Lapland, or to Finmark, or hire themselves for the still longer trip to Novaya Zemlia and Spitzbergen after seal, whale, and walrus. In the interior they are woodmen or small farmers, and they compare favourably with the Russians in honesty and sobriety. “The sociable, tipsy, thriftless Russian,” says the traveller just quoted, “will not shut himself up as a squatter in the lonely backwoods. The Finn, Quain, or Karelian prefers solitude and independence.”

To the voyager sailing from the mouth of the Dwina to the southern extremity of the White Sea, the Solovetsk Islands on his right arrest the eye by their fresh verdure and the pleasing diversity of their rocky bights and wooded slopes, from amid which rise the spires, cupolas, and roofs of numerous churches, convents, and hermitages. “Each height,” says Hepworth Dixon, who has given a long account of the place, “is crowned by a white church, a green cupola, and a golden cross. A line of wall, with gates and towers, extends along the upper quay; and high above this line spring convent, palace, dome, and cross. Within, the convent looks more durable and splendid than without; wall, rampart, guest-house, prison-tower, and church are all of brick and stone.” “One of the few tidy spots in Holy Russia,” says Mr. Rae.

This lonely group of islets in the Northern Sea has been famous for centuries in the ecclesiastical annals of the Russian Church, and is haunted by warlike as well as monkish memories. In its early days, Solovetsk was the secure retreat of pious monks from Novgorod, who fled hither from the pleasures of the world, in search of a desert solitude where they could wholly give themselves up to prayer and penance. Two of these anchorites—St. Savatie, or Sabbathus, and St. Zozima, the founders of the Solovetsk monastery—peculiarly distinguished themselves by their devotion and the severity of their ascetic regimen. After their death, miracles were performed at the touch of their consecrated dust, and the monastery became the greatest and most celebrated in Northern Russia.

When the English first came to the White Sea, its fame was already bruited abroad, and Ivan IV. paid it especial reverence. That reputation has continued down to the present day, and has even grown with the lapse of time; and every year pilgrims flock hither from all parts of Russia to kneel at the shrines of Zozima and Savatie, and before the wonderful image of the Virgin, who dispenses here the gift of healing, and has in all times taken Solovetsk under her peculiar care. Peter the Great paid more than one visit to the monastery; and his example was followed by the late Emperor.

It has not, however, invariably received favours from the civil and ecclesiastical powers as by law established. At the time of Nikon's reforms, Solovetsk was the stronghold, the citadel of the raskolniks. It sustained a siege of ten years before it was reduced; and the zealous monks who had pointed the cannon and wielded

the pike in the defence of the Old Ritual did not miss the crown of martyrdom.

The last warlike event in the history of the convent was its bombardment, during the Crimean War, by a British squadron, under Admiral Ommanney, in retaliation for the guns of the monastery having been fired at an English vessel. Shells were dropped through the roof of the principal church, and the buildings set on fire at different places, while the archimandrite and monks sang mass in front of the sacred tombs and the miraculous picture of the Virgin. Not a soul within the walls was injured; and on the strength of this, to the Russian mind, most indubitable proof of divine favour, the fame of Solovetsk rose higher than ever in the estimation of the faithful. In another sense, the existence of a rich, powerful, and prosperous community on this unkindly soil, and amid surroundings so desolate and forbidding, seems little short of miraculous. In spite of their inclement skies, the monks assiduously till the ground, and gather from it not only the grain and herbs, but even the fruits of warmer climes; and notwithstanding their isolation from the world, there are found among them men who cultivate also art and literature with a success that has made their lonely convent a "lamp of learning" in the northern darkness.

Leaving behind us Solovetsk, with its soil so strangely dented by pilgrims' knees and cannon-balls, we resume our voyage along the shores of the White Sea. We coast, on the left, a low peninsula, with sandy shores and marshy inlets—a barren and solitary foreground backed by pine woods. Where the large rivers discharge themselves into the Bay of Onega, and for some distance up the

western coast, the forests are of larger growth and more widely spread. Farther inland, the country is blotched by shallow ponds and marshes, large and small, which are drained by sluggish streams, or joined to each other after heavy rains, but are stagnant and isolated during the rest of the year. Fish of many varieties ascend these rivers and swarm in the lakes, and they form the staple article of diet. Small patches of barley, oats, and rye are grown, and potatoes and other garden vegetables are sometimes raised.

Before the Arctic Circle is reached, timber begins to fail. The spruce-fir will not grow beyond the sixty-seventh parallel of latitude, and the extreme limit of the Scotch fir is found about 69° north. The birch and alder, however, are found growing to respectable dimensions in the extreme north-western nook of Russia—at the mouth of the Pasvig in 70° north latitude.

The birch forest fills the glens that run between the gray rocks in Lapland and the Samoyede country, and its bright green foliage and ghostly white stem and branches cover the southern slopes of the hill-sides. Low ranges of hills traverse the country, offshoots apparently of the Ural chain, seeking to establish communication with the great mountains of the Scandinavian peninsula. They feebly mark the water-shed between the Dwina and the Petchora and Mezen rivers, that flow directly into the Arctic Ocean, and they divide the north-flowing and south-flowing rivers of Lapland.

On either side of Lake Imandra, in the "neck" of the great White Sea peninsula, these hills rise to a height of three thousand feet, and are always clad with snow. Under their shelter fine forests rise, and a profusion of

wild flowers carpet the sod. On the northern slopes, exposed to the full onslaught of the Polar storms, even the birch finds it hard to gain foothold and sustenance. Grass gives place to a scanty growth of moss and dwarf-willow. In some places the hills are clad with a snow-like covering of the white reindeer moss, and in search of these pastures the Mountain Lapp moves from place to place with his herd.

Of the two desert tracts into which the northern part of the government of Archangel is divided by the White Sea, the country of the Samoyedes, stretching from Cape Kanin to the confines of Asia, is the more extensive and the more desolate. The Samoyede people only number a few thousand souls, and the interest attaching to them is very far from arising from any attractiveness in their persons or their manners. They claim notice simply on account of the enormous range of country over which they are scattered, and the fact that, living within the bounds of Europe, they are yet essentially idolaters and savages.

They are a stunted, ill-favoured race, with dull, flat faces, small eyes, high cheek-bones, scanty beards, and depressed foreheads; and their low physical type does not belie their intellectual deficiency. The Orthodox Church claims most of them as her children; but it has not won them from their heathenish practices, and has conspicuously failed to teach them the virtue of cleanliness.

One of the most recent observers of Samoyede life—Professor Nordenskiöld—found a tribe professing Christianity, whom he visited near Vaygatz Strait in 1878, still worshipping their idols. Nothing can better illustrate the poverty and degradation of these people than the

primitive appearance of their "gods." "One consisted of a stone which, by the help of brightly-coloured patches, had been made into a sort of doll; another was a similar doll, with a piece of copper-plate for a face; and a third was a little skin doll ornamented with ear-rings and pearls. In general they resembled the rag dolls which peasant children make for themselves without the help of the toy-shops of towns." Of their mode of life and their burial customs Nordenskiöld says:—"The Samoyede tent is formed of deer-skins, and is of quite the same form as the Lapp *kota*. There is always to be found in the neighbourhood of the tent a large number of dogs, which are employed in winter for general purposes, and in summer for tracking boats against the current. At a *simovie* (fishing-place) where we landed, we found, as usual, a burying-place. The bodies were placed in large coffins above ground, with a cross nearly always erected beside them. At one of the graves a sacred picture was affixed to the cross, which must be regarded as a further proof that a Christian reposed in the coffin. Notwithstanding this, some clothes which had belonged to the deceased were found hanging on a bush at the grave, together with a bundle containing food, principally dried fish. At the graves of well-to-do natives, we learned that the survivor even places some rouble notes beside the food, that the departed may not be altogether devoid of ready money on his entrance into the other world."

On the breaking up of the winter ice the whole of this "Siberia in Europe," from the Mezen to the Ural range, is entirely cut off from communication with the rest of the world. The land is a vast half-

thawed, wholly impassable swamp. The rivers are impetuous torrents full of floating ice. Two British naturalists, Messrs. Seebohm and Harvie Brown, travelled eight hundred miles in sledges over the Government post road from Archangel to Ust Zylma, on the Petchora, in April 1875, and found the track through the forest a "diabolical" series of ups and downs. "Sometimes the sledge would be on the top of a steep hill, the first horse in the valley and the third horse on the top of the next hill. The motion was like that of a boat in a chopping sea, and the sledge banged about from pillar to post to such an extent that we scarcely felt the want of exercise."

Suddenly this snowy covering begins to melt, and then for weeks it is almost impossible to move about out of doors. The Petchora, in its lower course, is a magnificent stream—"fifteen times as broad as the Thames at Hammersmith;" the dark forests of pine are impressive in their stately solemnity, the bare level *tundra* lands spread away to the horizon without break or bound. Wherever the eyes are turned the landscape is vast and mournful and silent; and we look away from scenes so sublime and so solitary with a feeling of relief.

Russian Lapland, the country between the White Sea and Varanger Fiord, where the Norwegian coast begins, is a little less rigorous in climate, and somewhat more green and habitable, than the Samoyede wastes. The Lapps, too, are neither so low in stature nor so poverty-stricken, neglected, and isolated as their neighbours to the east of the White Sea. The seasons are a trifle less unkindly to them, and they have the good fortune to be placed many hundred miles nearer to the influences of civilization. All this is reflected in the

comparatively high social and intellectual condition which the Lapp occupies. The race have partially given up their nomad habits.

In the interior the reindeer is still their mainstay and their comfort; their beast of burden and their dairy animal; the source on which they depend for food and shelter, clothes and companionship. But many Laplanders devote themselves exclusively and successfully to fishing; they make long voyages as sailors and hunters with the whaling and sealing ships, and bring home roubles in their pockets and new notions in their heads. Their communities have a fixed range, with some nucleus of huts on a sheltered river bank or by the side of a lake, where, in the interior, they make diligent attempts to cultivate patches of grain and potatoes, and they are gradually accustoming themselves to agriculture and settled habits of life.

Education has made some progress among them, and they have been found not unapt to learn. If the visitor can conquer his prejudices to dirt, grease, and smoke, he will have no difficulty in discovering attractive traits in the Laplanders. Mr. Du Chaillu and Mr. Rae have lately made great friends with them, and are warm in praise of their honesty, gentleness, and intelligence.

The Russian Lapp is officially classed as a Russian Churchman. Soon after Martha, the *possadna* of Novgorod, founded Kem, Novgorodian bands expelled the Norsemen from what is now Russian Lapland, and ere long began, by their own forcible weapons of argument, to recommend their religion to the heathen natives. A small monastery—that of Boris-gleb—was planted on the west bank of the Pasvig, where it still exists, a

minute but precious excrescence of a great empire. The Lapp faith, though purer than that of their Samoyede brethren, is still largely and curiously mixed up with their ancient idolatrous rites. The worship of Yumala is not quite extinct; in the northern lights, often witnessed with great splendour in these latitudes, the wavering conflict of the spirits of the air is seen—the portent of dire calamity; the Prince of Evil is still a secret power, though reindeer are no longer sacrificed to him. There is an awful and mystic significance in the enclosures, formed of birch and fir boughs, which the Lapps, like some of the Finn peoples on the Volga, set apart in honour of the old gods.

The Lapps have not quite forgotten the practice of the "black arts" for which they were once famed and feared throughout Europe. Foul weather, instead of having its origin in America or in the Atlantic, according to some modern notions, was then believed to be brewed in Lapland by the devilish charms of "secret black and midnight hags," whose shapes, as they rode through the air maliciously rejoicing in the havoc they had let loose, could often be dimly discerned by the superstitious scudding through the rack of storm-clouds or whirling snowflakes. A great place of gathering of these wizards, or *noards*, was the Sviatoi Nos (Holy Cape), near where Willoughby and his men perished. Here, at the turning-point of many a voyage, they practised their incantations, with aid of the magic drum and libations of reindeer blood, and made a good profit by selling a "capful" of fair wind to English sailors bound to the White Sea.

The witches and wizards of Lapland now-a-days are much more humble and restricted in their field of opera-

tions. Their most potent charms are only employed to spoil a neighbour's fishing, to lame his pet reindeer, or to cast upon himself and his family the "evil eye." These supposed powers, however, give to the "magicians" among the Lapps, as among the Samoyedes, a considerable influence; and the Russians, Norwegians, Swedes, and Finlanders dwelling in their vicinity are by no means free of the infectious dread that they inspire. If the Lapp no longer scours through the clouds on a broomstick, he has other means of progression in the winter-time that are almost as unfamiliar to the experiences of more southern climes. On foot, on his *skids* or snow-skates, six feet in length, the Laplander skims the snow-covered surface of the lake, or darts down the frozen slopes, with the rapidity and agility of a swallow on the wing. Seated in his light reindeer-sleigh, and muffled up to the eyes in fur as a defence against the intense cold, he makes long journeys across the icy waste with speed and safety, managing his "horned steed" with admirable skill and address.

Their language and many physical traits and customs show that the Laplanders are allied to the neighbouring population of Finland. The two peoples indeed so blend into each other, through intermarriage and gradual approximation of pursuits, that it is not easy to draw a line of demarcation between Finland and Lapland; and the opinion has been hazarded that the Lopari, as the Russians style them, are simply the northern section of the Finnish people who have been squeezed "out into the cold" by the pressure of stronger races from the south. Their rigorous climate and their isolation would explain their diminutive stature and the backwardness

of their condition. They are Finns in spite of their stature, just as the dwarf-birch of their heaths is a birch in spite of its stunted growth and gnarled and twisted stem.

It is not necessary to enter into a full description of Finland and the past history and present condition of its people. Like Poland, though part of the Czar's European dominions, it is outside of Russia. It has its peculiar language, religion, and nationality, all presenting strong marks of contrast to the prevalent Russian type; and it has a separate organization and special laws.

The Finns of Finland are not like their kin on the Volga, surrounded on all sides by a Slav population, which is gradually absorbing and "Russifying" them. Only within the present century has the country been united to the empire; and on any disruption of the autocratic power Finland would be at least as likely to try to join itself to a neighbouring nation, or form itself into a separate state, as to willingly take part in a new reorganization of Russia. It has received its Lutheran faith and its civilization from Sweden. A large infusion of the population, especially on the sea-coast, are of Scandinavian descent. The language, the customs, the national character and sympathies, have been essentially modified by contact and old association with Sweden; and the aspirations of an intelligent people naturally turn towards a constitutional monarchy rather than a despotism, however "benevolent." Education has made considerable progress; and until within the last two or three generations Finland and Sweden had a "common fund" of literary as well as of military glory.

Too scattered and weak a nation to be able to maintain their independence in the gigantic struggles between the two great northern powers that lay on either side of them, the Finlanders showed themselves, under the banner of Charles the Twelfth, and in more recent conflicts as soldiers of the Czar, possessed of splendid soldierly qualities. Intellectually, too, they have shown that they need not be ashamed of a comparison with other northern peoples; and recently a vigorous "Young Finland" school has arisen that has assiduously explored the rich stores of Finnish poetry and folklore, and has raised the native language to the dignity of being one of the literary tongues of Europe. In no part of the dominions of the Czar are the people more fit for self-government, and nowhere could that experiment, which cannot be much longer delayed, be tried with better prospects of success.

The inhabitants, numbering some two million in a territory of one hundred and forty-four thousand square miles, are an intelligent, hard-working race of agriculturists and fishermen, simple and frugal in their habits, though rather fond, like other northern peoples, of strong spirits, and presenting in many features of their character and daily life marked resemblances to the Swedes, with whom they were so long politically united. This resemblance, as might be expected, is most observable in the western districts, especially along the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia, where the tidy little villages lining the shores of the fiords, with their quaint wooden houses, the modest Protestant church, the troops of school children, the alertness, intelligence, and homely courtesy of the inhabitants, their costume and often their

dialect, might make a visitor fancy that he was sojourning in Scandinavia rather than in Russia.

As the traveller proceeds eastward and approaches St. Petersburg, a change, not for the better, is perceptible. The symptoms of taste and contrivance fade from the exterior of the dwellings, and comfort from their interiors; the tokens of brain and industry having been at work in the cultivation of the thin sandy soil, the draining of the marshes, and the clearing away of trees and boulders, become less evident; dirt accumulates in the streets; beards, boots, and overcoats grow in dimensions, and the natives become more fawning and subservient in manner, while losing the frank, hearty hospitality of their western kin, until at length we reach the old familiar dead-level of the Russian village.

Not only are these eastern districts of Finland, comprehended in the province of Viborg, and partly incorporated in the governments of St. Petersburg and Olonetz, more exposed to Russian influences by reason of their situation, but they have been much longer under the rule of Russia than the other portions of the Grand Duchy. They formed part of the extensive dominions on the eastern and southern side of the Baltic conquered by the great heroes of Swedish history, from Torquil Knutson in the thirteenth century down to Charles the Twelfth. These embraced not merely what is now known as Finland, but Ingermanland—the isthmus between Lake Ladoga and the Gulf of Finland, on which the Russian capital now stands—the “Baltic provinces” of Esthonia and Livonia, and Pomerania; in fact, the Baltic was a Swedish lake.

Many were the battles. the sieges. the doughty deeds

by sea and land, that were accomplished before these spoils were won for Sweden ; and then the most martial and intrepid of her sons, grasping at still wider conquests, lost the choicest of those that had already been secured. In the course of less than a century Sweden was deprived of all her hard-won possessions to the east of her present boundary, the river Tornea. The Peace of Nystadt in 1721 secured for Russia the province of Viborg and her conquests in Ingria and Esthonia ; the Peace of Abo, twenty-two years later, gave her another slice of Finland ; while by the Peace of Fredrikshamm, in 1809, the rest of the Grand Duchy, with the Aland Islands, was absorbed by the Empire.

While the jagged and broken coast of Finland, with its deep firths, still reaches of enclosed water, storm-chafed capes, and innumerable outlying islands and rocks—what in Scotland are called *skerries*—resemble on a diminished scale the Atlantic coast-line of Norway, the interior of the country has nothing corresponding to the great mountain backbone of the Scandinavian peninsula. There are some ranges of low hills in the centre of the country which form the nucleus of its drainage system, but the general character of the surface is flat or gently undulating. Forests of fir and larch, far-stretching fens, heaths, and sandy barrens, huge lichen-covered boulders that have floated thither in the Ice Age, at long intervals a patch of cultivation and a human habitation, and in the less sparsely inhabited parts traces here and there of what may by courtesy be called a road, make up the characteristic scenery of Finland. But if, even in the cheerful spring season, there are suggestions of loneliness and sadness in the aspect of their native land

this only endears it the more to the hearts of its loyal children.

Chief, however, among the natural features of Finland are its lakes. Indeed, no country in the Old World is so abundantly, so superfluously supplied with fresh-water reservoirs. Any one who glances at a map of the Grand Duchy cannot help being struck by the bewildering distribution of earth and water, the lace-like pattern of the multitudinous peninsulas, isthmuses, and islands that represent the solid land, and the fantastic filigree work of lakes, rivers, and fens covering thousands of square miles of surface. This part of Finland looks more like a great lake that has got entangled, as in a net, among an infinite number of fine threads of land, than an ordinary piece of *terra firma*. If it is puzzling on the map, what must it be in actual travelling experience! How is one to make a cross-country march over this "crude consistence" of moist and dry, unless he is provided with the travelling apparatus of Milton's fiend, who

"O'er bog or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or rare,
With head, hands, wings, or feet pursues his way,
And swims or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies?"

Fortunately the dwellers in those parts have long ago discovered the shortest and easiest cuts through this labyrinth of lake and land; and in former times these morasses and islands protected Finland's independence, as the fens of Ely preserved the last liberties of the Saxons. Strong places were established at the fords, at the narrows between lake and lake, and on islands that had easy communication between either shore. Roads have been constructed, and causeways and bridges

great part of the route, the traveller can traverse the country from north to south or from east to west with little interruption.

Apart, however, from the railway line that now crosses Finland, almost the only route familiar to tourists is that which follows the coast, past the chief towns of historical and commercial note—Nystadt; Abo, the old capital; Helsingfors, the new seat of administration and learning, defended by the strong fortress of Sveaborg, bombarded by the Allies in 1855; Lovisa; Fredrikshamm; and Viborg—to St. Petersburg. On this journey we cross the Saima Canal, which connects the lake of that name with the Gulf of Finland, while the river Saima unites the lake with the greater reservoir of Lake Ladoga.

Lake Saima presents all the features of the Finland meres on an exaggerated scale. Low islands are scattered over every part of its surface; long tongues of land pierce it to the centre from every side; still longer and curiously intricate branches and channels join it to other great ponds of exactly similar design—Orevesi, Kuopio, Pielisjarvi, and others—and altogether this Briareus of lakes might perhaps compete with any other body of fresh water in length of coast-line. By canal and river Lake Saima is connected with the two “keys” of Finland—Viborg, by the salt waters of the Gulf of Finland, and Kexholm, on an island of Lake Ladoga—of which Peter the Great possessed himself in 1710, when, having planted his feet firmly on the isthmus of Ingria, and laid the foundations of the future capital, he began his conquests on the Grand Duchy.

CHAPTER XIII.

ST. PETERSBURG.



THE shores of Lake Ladoga are still, for the most part, girt with swamp and forest. The clearings are partial and widely scattered, the population is sparse, and the woods are dense and tall. Much commerce, it is true, passes through the lake, and there are thriving communities of fishermen, lumbermen, pitch-distillers, and agriculturists. But it is of vast extent—indeed, the largest collection of fresh water in Europe; and its fleets of barges, rafts, and sailing craft make but a small figure in the wide vista of waters enclosed in the dark frame of pine-forest.

The climate is rude and boreal, and the soil generally sandy or marshy. There are few sites suitable for patriarchal towers or the villa residences of rich city merchants. It is a semi-arctic lake and a semi-arctic landscape, and few would suspect that not many miles from these sombre shores stands one of the richest, gayest, and most magnificent of European capitals, the metropolis of the most extensive of modern empires.

Yet little more than a century and a half ago the banks of the Neva were as lonely and desolate as the most sequestered nooks of Ladoga are to-day. The dismantled

arts, and the civilization of the West should enter into the rude heart of Muscovy. The obstacles to his designs were such as would have appalled a less powerful intellect and less iron will. The soil had only lately been conquered by Russia from the Swedes; the two powerful northern nations were still grappling fiercely for its possession. The site was low, marshy, and unhealthy, and subject to periodic inundation. The climate was of Arctic rigour, and the country around desolated by war and incapable of productive cultivation. Russian prejudices and national feelings were passionately opposed to the removal of the Czar from his old capital; and the nations of Europe were jealous of this strange half-wild figure from the East that suddenly appeared in their midst and claimed to be of their company. Peter's savage impetuosity overcame all obstacles.

In May 1703, the first stakes were driven of a bastion which was constructed on an island of the Neva, afterwards called Petersburg, opposite the site where the imperial palace now stands. Here the beginnings were formed of the present citadel, and a small wooden church dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul arose. A portion of the army was first employed in the labour of founding the capital; but afterwards no fewer than forty thousand Finnish and Russian peasants were drafted into the work of draining, pile-driving, digging, and building. Streets of wooden houses began to line the river, and broad avenues were cut extending back into the marsh and forest; for the new city was not to be after the old, filthy, confined, and irregular type, but to be the model of symmetry as well as the crown of grandeur for the rest of the empire.

Little by little trade and population came and took root. Foreign vessels arrived at the new port formed at Cronstadt, and at the wharves on the Neva, the first arrival curiously enough being a Dutch ship freighted by Peter's old friend Cornelius Kalf of Zaandam, where the Czar had worked as a journeyman carpenter. Extraordinary inducements were held out to the nobles, merchants, and artisans to settle at St. Petersburg. Where these failed, recourse was had to compulsory measures. Every vessel arriving at the port, whether barge from the northern lakes, or merchant ship from the high seas, was bound to bring a certain quantity of stones, brick, or gravel to strengthen the unstable foundations of the city, to form streets, and to build new edifices of granite. Nay, to draw masons thither, a ukase was issued forbidding the erection of buildings of stone in any other town of the empire. The first rude draft, as it were, of the Czar's ambitious plan—the unpaved miry streets, lined by squalid shanties, and the churches, palaces, and fortresses of wood—began to be transformed into a stately structure of more durable material.

During the early period of its history a perfect tempest of war beat around the young community. Peter was assailed by the united military strength of Sweden and Poland, led by the great captain of his time, Charles XII., and was frequently, nay, almost constantly, worsted. The whole of his resources were needed to withstand the ungovernable rage of the Swede; and there was rebellion, open or smouldering, throughout his own dominions. But he never relaxed from his purpose to found a great port and capital on the Neva. At every breathing-space in the struggle he returned to the

prosecution of his inflexible design ; and when at last his arch-enemy was overthrown, and the tide of battle rolled northwards into Finland, he was able to devote himself with renewed energy to the task. Fires wasted the budding capital. When a strong easterly wind blew, driving the waters of Ladoga into the channel of the Neva, the river rose, inundating and devastating the newly-formed streets. Owing to the low and marshy situation, epidemics were frequent and fatal. The variations of temperature were so rapid and excessive that the Russian courtiers, inured to extremes of cold and heat as they were, grumbled at being compelled to live in a city more hyperborean in latitude and climate even than Stockholm.

Peter was inexorable to the obstacles of nature and to the complaints of his subjects. He did not spare others, but he spared himself least of all. When the work of founding the city began, he built for himself a small cottage of wood, which may still be seen by the curious, on the river bank over against the splendid Winter Palace. Here, says Rambaud, Peter installed himself, and superintended the growth of the infant capital, "sometimes piloting with his own hands the first Dutch ships that ventured into these waters, sometimes giving chase to the Swedish vessels which came to insult him. He decorated the church of the fortress with carvings of ivory, the work of his own hands, hung it with flags conquered from the Swedes, and consecrated there his little boat, 'ancestor of the Russian fleet ;' and, breaking through the tradition that insisted on the princes being buried in St. Michael at Moscow, chose out in St. Peter and St. Paul his own tomb and that of his successors."

There was a singular appropriateness in the manner of Peter's death, from the effects of a chill caught by flinging himself into the ice-cold waters of the Neva to save a boat in distress. When the great Czar was gone, it seemed at first doubtful whether his successors would carry out his wishes with regard to St. Petersburg, and its fate long hung trembling in the balance. But Catherine II., a princess scarcely inferior to Peter in ambition and strength of character, thoroughly understood and sympathized with his great plans; and since her time the growth of the capital in population, riches, and magnificence has been almost unchecked.

Let us now approach St. Petersburg, not from the side of Ladoga and the frozen wastes of the north, but from the side of the Baltic, and examine what manner of city this is that, in the space of a hundred and eighty years, has arisen out of a desolate marsh to be the worthy capital of a great military empire. First, there heave in sight the frowning bastions, the forest of masts, and the painted spires of Cronstadt, the port and defence of St. Petersburg—the eyelid, it might be called, that guards the “eye” of Russia from harm. The sights and sounds of Cronstadt are all suggestive of military, naval, and commercial life. A very large proportion of the forty thousand inhabitants consists of the garrison. In the busy “open” season, between May and November, the docks are crowded with shipping, the quays encumbered with merchandise, and the throngs of people in the streets are cosmopolitan rather than specially Russian.

A brief sail brings us to the mouths of the Neva and the first houses of the capital. As has already been indicated the Neva, about the centre of St. Petersburg.

breaks up into several channels. The first of these to leave the main stream is the Nevka, which branches off on the right, and itself splits up into the Great and the Little Nevka. The main body of the river also separates itself lower down into the Great and Little Neva, and between these principal streams there are subsidiary channels, forming a series of islands, great and small. Chief among these islands are St. Petersburg, where the city had its first beginnings, surrounded by the waters of the Neva and the Great and Little Nevka, and Vassili Ostrog, between the Great and Little Neva.

On these islands, and on the north bank of the stream, the older buildings of St. Petersburg arose; but for a long period the mass of the population has shifted with the court to the southern bank. Here there are further subdivisions of water, by means of four lines of canals, so that altogether, within the city boundaries, we find some fourteen water-courses, a lake, eight canals, and nineteen islands. Like Venice or Amsterdam, therefore, St. Petersburg is an amphibious city; only, her walls are washed by the fresh rushing waters of the majestic Neva, instead of by the salt sea. The Neva is the pride of the Russian capital and the greatest of all its sights. It is no dead, muddy, evil-smelling ditch, like the Thames at London or the Seine at Paris, but a broad, clear, and powerful stream that looks worthy of its mission as the highway of commerce and the seat of empire. Its breadth opposite the Winter Palace, where it is crossed by a bridge of boats, is about three quarters of a mile, while its depth in its lower channels is fifty feet.

St. Petersburg may claim, equally with the "Queen of the Adriatic," with which it has so often been compared and contrasted, the title of the City of Palaces. No other capital has so many royal and princely residences. In none have the situation, the grouping, and architectural features of the buildings been so studiously arranged, so as to produce an imposing and magnificent scenic effect. As the Neva is the glory of St. Petersburg, so the city turns all its beauties towards the river, and views them reflected in its waters. Every bend of the stream reveals a *coup d'œil* which it seems impossible to rival, until a little farther on a new vista is opened up of lofty palace fronts, adorned by Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian columns surmounted by massive friezes, entablatures, and sculptured groups; temples of Byzantine, Grecian, or Gothic design, overtopped by swelling cupolas in green and gold, stiletto-like spires, or vast square towers; endless ranges of public and private buildings, monuments, warehouses, and docks, with quays thronged with passengers and vehicles; spacious and splendid streets, stretching away in far perspective for two or three miles; gardens and boulevards, relieving with their fresh green foliage the uniformity of lines and colour in the masses of stone-work; and broad canals and channels branching off to the right and left. And in the midst of all, giving an air of space, freedom, and dignity to the whole scene, flows the wide stream of the Neva, thronged by craft of all kinds and sizes, from the tiny gondola to the man-of-war, and from the rude barge, laden with timber, grain, or flax from the Volga, to the largest class of sea-going merchant ships.

Ascending the channel of the Great Neva, we have on the left the stately fronts of the School of Mines, the School of Marine Cadets, the Academy of Arts, the Observatory, and the Academy of Sciences, lining the river wall of Vassili Ostrog (Basil's Island); while on the right, or southern side, are docks and admiralty yards, succeeded by the handsome range of churches, hotels, places of business, and residences of merchant princes known as the English Quay. Nearly opposite to the Grecian portico of the Imperial Academy of Arts, and about the middle of the English Quay, is the celebrated Nicolas Bridge, where the only permanent roadway over the Great Neva is carried across the river on eight colossal iron arches resting on piers of granite. The architect of this work, Stanislas Herbedze, had to contend not only with a stream of great width, depth, and strength of current, but with a shifting bottom and marshy soil, and to guard against dangers from floods and ice. Its successful completion, after fifteen years' labour, is one of the triumphs of engineering. Higher up are the Palace, the Troitski, and Liteinoi floating bridges. The second of these, extending from opposite the military parade-ground of the "Czar's Meadow" across the broadest part of the Neva to the fortress on the island of St. Petersburg, is three-quarters of a mile in length.

It is between the Nicolas and Troitski Bridges, and particularly at the point where the river separates itself into the channels of the Great and Little Neva, that the principal buildings of the capital are grouped, and the finest pictorial and architectural effects are found. Isaac's Place is the "Place of St. Mark" of St. Petersburg — the centre of interest, the starting-point from

which the sightseer naturally begins his exploration of the city marvels, and probably the goal to which he returns at the close of his day's labours. The spacious open square looks out upon the Neva with a frontage of some three hundred yards, and its farther end is closed by that stupendous mass of marble and bronze, the Cathedral of St. Isaac. On the margin of the river, half-way between the Senate House, which ends the line of the English Quay, and the Admiralty, is the celebrated equestrian statue of Peter the Great.

This most famous of the monuments of St. Petersburg was executed by the orders of Catherine II., and was the work of a French sculptor, Falconet. Peter, astride a mighty charger, is represented as reining his steed back upon its haunches on the brink of a precipice, while he stretches his sceptre over the river, and seems to survey with proud triumph the wonderful growth of the city of which he is the "posthumous creator," while underneath the horse's feet writhes a serpent, emblematic of the difficulties that were encountered and overcome in founding a capital on a quaking bog. The statue is of bronze, and of colossal size, the horse being seventeen feet in height and the rider eleven feet. It stands upon a pedestal formed of a block of granite weighing fifteen hundred tons, and transported with infinite labour from the neighbouring plains of Finland. An error of taste has been committed in smoothing and planing away the natural angles of the rock, and shaping the rough boulder into a conventional form altogether inappropriate to the symbolic meaning of the monument and to the rude herculean task that it commemorates; but the attitude and expression of the great Czar, the spirited action of the charger, and

the general idea and effect of the whole group, are worthy of the subject and of the site.

After all, Isaac's Place is only a slice of a much larger open space in the heart of the city—the Admiralty Square. In the centre of this grand square is the Admiralty building itself, one of the largest and most notable edifices in the Russian capital. The front of the Admiralty, facing the south, is a third of a mile in length, and the two wings, stretching to the margin of the Neva, are each six hundred and fifty feet. Enclosed between these wings, and extending along the river bank, are the Government dockyards, where vessels of the Russian navy are constructed, with slips, wharves, moulding and engine sheds, anchor and cordage stores, blacksmiths', carpenters', and joiners' sheds, and all the other necessary apparatus for an establishment of the kind; while the vast building itself contains the offices of the naval department of the Government, with a museum in which are conserved the many objects of interest connected with the maritime history of the empire. Formerly the Admiralty was enclosed by a moat and ramparts, but the place of these is now occupied by a shady line of boulevards. The chief entrance in the south front is through a grand archway, on either side of which are gigantic representations of the terrestrial and celestial globes, and overhead frescoes emblematic of Russia's naval power. Above rises a square tower, supported by columns; and surmounting this are the lantern, and the tall, slender, richly-gilt spire which forms one of the most prominent features in a general view of St. Petersburg, from whatever side it is surveyed.

Opposite the Admiralty is a crescent of lofty build-

ings of uniform architecture, and pierced in the centre by a colossal archway,—the Foreign Office of Russia; while separated from it by an open space corresponding to Isaac's Place, and standing on the quay of the Neva, is the Winter Palace, the official town residence of the emperors.

In the buildings grouped around and within this square—in the Winter Palace, the Senate, the Foreign Office, the War Office, the Synod, and the Admiralty—are concentrated almost the whole of the vast and complicated machinery by which the executive government of Russia is carried on. The mainspring of the whole is within the palace itself, centred in the person of the Autocrat, the sole source of initiative action in legislative, judicial, and administrative affairs, as well as of honours and dignities. The vehicle of the Emperor's will is his "Private Cabinet," the various sections of which direct the executive government and the making and promulgation of the law, the control of the army and police, and the conduct of educational and ecclesiastical affairs. The actual functions of government are intrusted to four great Boards—the Council of the Empire, with its three great departments having the superintendence of legislation, civil administration, and finance respectively; the Directing Senate—or *Pravitelstwujuſchtschi Senat*, if any one cares to have its official title—whose committees sit both at St. Petersburg and at Moscow, and whose duties are partly executive and partly deliberative, while it is a court of last resort in certain judicial cases; the Holy Synod, composed of the dignitaries of the Church, and having control of the religious affairs of the empire; and, lastly, the Council of Ministers, divided into eleven

departments—to wit, the Imperial Household, Foreign Affairs, War, Navy, Interior, Public Instruction, Finance, Justice, Imperial Domains, Public Works, and General Control.

Subordinate to this central authority are the various local governments of the fourteen viceroyalties, fifty-one governments, and three hundred and twenty districts into which the empire is subdivided, each elaborately organized, and many of them regulated by special laws and constitutions. It would occupy a large volume to describe adequately in detail the functions and relations of this enormous and intricate machine, which, in theory at least, unites the vast resources and strength of Russia, her army of three millions of men, her powerful navy, the still more influential moral force of the Church, and the whole organization of civil life from the highest officer of state to the humblest member of the village “mir,” and places them in the hands of one man, for the expression of his will over ninety millions of people. It is the less necessary to enter into the subject, as bureaucracy has probably seen its best days in Russia. The apparatus—as was only to be looked for—in spite of theoretic perfection, is rusty in part, in others defective, and in not a few respects an instrument of oppression. It is constantly being altered in details; and probably will soon have to be altered in essentials, if the dangers threatened from a people who have had so much of officialism that they are growing sick of order itself are to be avoided.

A voluminous work also might be written—many books, indeed, have been written—on the court ceremonies and etiquette and the manner of life within the charmed

circle of fashion of which the imperial family is the centre, and which, like the Government, are systematized and regulated in the minutest details. It will be more profitable and interesting perhaps to say something instead of the Winter Palace itself. The site of the official residence of the emperors was originally occupied by a house belonging to Count Apraxin, Peter's high admiral, who first taught the Russians to conquer at sea. The Empress Anne first took up her town residence here; and in 1762 it was rebuilt, under the direction of the Empress Catherine, after a design by Count Rastrelli. In 1837 it was burned to the ground; but two years later it had risen in its present magnificent form.

The structure, which is rich and ornate, even to heaviness, in its style of architecture, is four stories in height, and stands proudly apart from the other buildings on the Great Quay of the Neva, from whence a grand flight of marble steps leads up to the principal entrance. The frontage to the river is four hundred and fifty-five feet, and that facing the Admiralty three hundred and fifty feet. Who shall describe with appropriate elaboration the glories of the clusters of Ionic and Corinthian columns and pilasters, the richly-carved capitals and entablatures, the ornamented architraves, flowers, festoons, and arabesques, the corniced and pedimented windows, and balustraded roof surmounted by vases and statues? Whatever fault may be found with the style—and public buildings of St. Petersburg, like those of some other capitals, are by no means free of the reproach of meretriciousness—there can be no question of the imposing general effect, and the situation of the building is one of the finest in Europe. The interior

of the palace is furnished and embellished in the most sumptuous style. The whole resources of the art of the carver, decorator, and upholsterer have been expended on it; and the higher branches of art, painting and sculpture, are worthily represented.

The visitor is led through a maze of banqueting-halls, drawing-rooms, audience-chambers, corridors, and galleries, and up and down magnificent flights of stairs, until he gets bewildered by the blaze of gilt and bronze, the columns of marble and porphyry, the gorgeous draperies, carpets, and mosaics, the huge mirrors and candelabra, the richly-carved cornices and painted ceilings, and the thousand and one rare and precious works of art that have here been gathered together. In the lower story alone there are nearly a hundred principal rooms, and the area of the different apartments is not less than four hundred thousand square feet. The most famous among the rooms in the Winter Palace are the great banqueting-hall, which measures one hundred and eighty-nine feet in length by one hundred and ten in breadth; the hall of St. George, a still more magnificently decorated apartment, in which the chapter of the military order named after the popular saint of Russia is held; the white hall; the throne-room; the gallery of field-m Marshals; and the portrait-gallery; and the curious may see the crown jewels of Russia, and many other objects of artistic and historical interest.

Most people, however, will choose to devote more time to the splendid collection of paintings—one of the most extensive and precious in the world—in the adjoining picture-galleries, museums, and libraries of the Hermitage Palaces, than to an exploration of the wonders

of the Imperial Palace. Here, by the care and public spirit of successive emperors, have been gathered examples of all the great schools of painting, including a large representation of the great names in English art. The Great and Little Hermitage and the Hermitage Theatre are connected with each other and with the Winter Palace by covered galleries, and, like the imperial residence, are ranged along the Grand Quay of the Neva, to which they present a frontage of nearly eight hundred feet. If we add to this the Winter Palace itself, we have a continuous range of imperial palaces more than a third of an English mile in length, impressive in their vast size and stately proportions, enriched within and without with all that wealth could supply or taste suggest to please the fancy of generations of autocratic sovereigns, and bursting with all kinds of superb ornaments and costly furniture, and with still more priceless treasures of art, science, and literature—*chefs d'œuvre* of Raphael, Titian, and Correggio, of Greuse, Poussin, and Claude, of Rembrandt, Cuyp, and Paul Potter; statues in marble and bronze by the great sculptors of ancient and modern times; collections of engravings, jewellery, cameos, and antiquities of every kind, and a library containing many thousands of rare works on archæology, and manuscripts reaching back to the earliest beginning of Russian literature and history. The principal literary treasures of the Russian capital have, however, been removed to the Imperial Public Library, on the Nevski Prospect, where has been brought together one of the richest and most extensive collections of books in the world, embracing nearly a million of printed volumes.

The line of palaces on or near the Neva does not end with the Hermitage; for beyond it is the Marble Palace,

originally a present from the Empress Catherine to her favourite, Prince Orloff, and then behind the extensive lawns and shrubberies of the Summer Gardens are the Summer Palace, once occupied by Peter the Great; the quaint structure named the Castle of St. Michael, built by the Emperor Paul, and where he met with his tragic death; and the magnificent modern Michael Palace, close to the walls of which the late Emperor fell, shattered by a Nihilist bomb, as he was about to enter his carriage. Higher up the river we find the Taurida Palace, surrounded by extensive grounds, the gift of Catherine to another of her numerous favourites, the celebrated Marshal Potemkin, and now reserved for dowagers of the imperial family, while members of the reigning house have their residences scattered through other parts of the city.

On this southern side of the Neva also are two far-famed monastic piles that are palatial in their extent and splendour—the Smolnoi Church and Convent, with the attached institutions for the education of ladies of noble birth and of the daughters of simple citizens, and the Monastery of St. Alexander Nevski. The Smolnoi Church is of white marble, and surmounting it are five domes of blue, blazing with golden stars. The Nevski Monastery ranks next after those at Kiev and at Troitsa near Moscow, in precedence, sanctity, and importance, and, like the other two mentioned, is the seat of a metropolitan. Here, in their shrine of solid silver, rest the bones of the canonized Grand Duke Alexander, the conqueror of the Tatars on Lake Peipus, and of the Swedes on the Neva, who had afterwards to bend his neck under the foot of the Tartar Khans.

Alexander Nevski is a saint in high repute on the banks of the Neva, where a political as well as a religious purpose is fulfilled by keeping up the memory of his exploits; and many are the rich gifts that have been brought hither to enrich his shrine and the church that contains it by successive emperors, princes, priests, envoys, and courtiers. Within the precincts of St. Alexander Nevski some of the greatest and noblest of Russia's sons are buried: it is the Westminster Abbey, the Père-la-Chaise of St. Petersburg. In a small side chapel in the Church of the Annunciation are the tombs of the Naryshkin family, the kin of Peter the First, and near by are the monuments of the celebrated generals Suvaroff, Rumiantsof, and Miloradovitch. In the adjoining cemetery a white marble column rises to the memory of Lomonosof, the father of Russian poetry—a sign of the uprising of a new literature, and that a higher and grander fame than can be won in war is receiving the recognition of the nation.

The most notable of the ecclesiastical edifices of St. Petersburg, however, is the new Church of St. Isaac the Dalmatian in Isaac Place. Surrounded on every side by colossal and splendid public buildings, this “mountain of bronze and granite” seems, by its vast bulk and height, to fill the greatest space in the eye while taking a panoramic glance over the Russian capital. There was a church on this spot in Peter's time, which Catherine afterwards caused to be reconstructed of marble; but the present magnificent building, which occupied nearly forty years in construction, owes its existence to the munificence of the Emperors Alexander I. and Nicolas. Like that of most Russian

churches, the ground plan forms a Greek cross. The length is three hundred and forty feet, and the breadth three hundred feet. The architect, M. Montferrand, has sought to attain his effects by the grand simplicity of the lines combined with the stupendous magnitude of the scale and the richness of the materials of the building. The great central dome surmounts four grand porticos, forming the entrances to the church. Access to these is obtained by four broad flights of steps, each step composed of a single block of granite. The two principal porticos are supported by sixteen polished granite columns of the Corinthian order, each hewn from the solid rock, while the side porticos have eight columns each. These gigantic monolithic pillars are sixty feet in height and seven feet in diameter; and they are set on bronze pedestals, and crowned by massive capitals of bronze and friezes of fire-polished stone. High above this rises the great central cupola, a vast burnished dome of copper, resting on a peristyle of thirty columns; and above it, "like a chapel on a hill-top," the rotunda, bearing aloft, at a height of three hundred and seventeen feet from the ground, the golden cross that is one of the great "landmarks" of the stranger in the city. Two smaller domes, similar in design to the main cupola, surmount each of the two principal porticos.

All the resources that the Russian genius and religious feeling can employ have been lavished on the interior of this great fane of the Orthodox faith; but with so much yet to describe, we must not linger over marble pavements and richly-gilded roofs, the paintings and carvings, the precious shrines, screens, and

altar furniture, and the pillars of malachite, lapis-lazuli, and porphyry, that may be seen by the curious or the devout in St. Isaac's. Before leaving its neighbourhood, however, mention may be made of a work by the same architect that stands not far off, in the Admiralty Square. This is the Alexander Column, a single shaft of red Finland granite, eighty-four feet in height and fourteen feet in diameter, and the largest monolithic monument of modern times. The base consists of another huge block of granite twenty-five feet in height; while the capital, which is surmounted by a winged figure of Hope, consists of bronze smelted down from Turkish cannons captured by the generals of Alexander I., in whose honour the column has been erected.

Beyond the Neva, and opposite to the Hermitage Palace, is a church of more venerable and interesting associations than have yet gathered round St. Isaac's—the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul. Its slender, needle-like spire alone, shooting up into the air to the height of three hundred and eighty-seven feet, will not allow the visitor to St. Petersburg to pass it by unnoticed. It is the highest pinnacle in the capital, and almost in Russia, surpassing considerably in altitude the spire of the Admiralty and the cross of St. Isaac's, the two city landmarks that dispute with it for pre-eminence. Beneath this conspicuous monument, that, seen above the sea of buildings, looks more like "the mast of some great admiral" than a structure of stone, rests the dust of the great founder of the city, and grouped around, as he had decreed, are the tombs of his successors on the throne of Russia. The walls of the church are covered with trophies won in wars